BIG COMICS SPECIAL

# 宇宙英雄物語

Man from Ikou Hoshi

第八集

星野之宣

Yukinobu Hoshino Presents

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

THE CASE RECORDS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

# 宗像教授異考録

Munakata Kyoujin Ikouroku

Collection 8

第八集

星野之宣

Yukinobu Hoshino Presents

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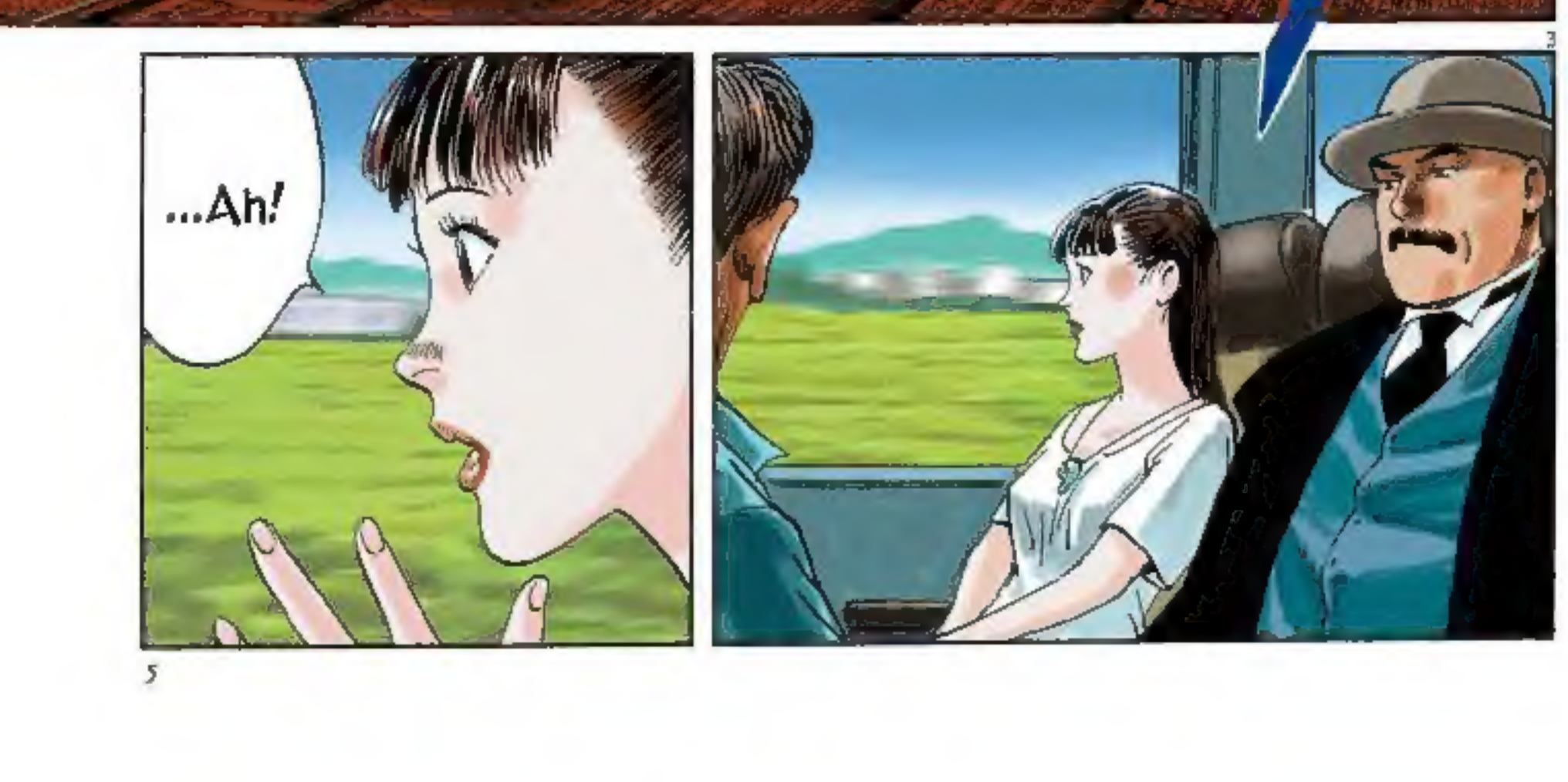
# CHAPTER 23:
# THE ABANDONED RAILWAY

Hokkaido
Sapporo Station

.....

May I sit here?
THE AIRPORT RAPID SERVICE FOR NEW CHITOSE AIRPORT WILL BE DEPARTING SHORTLY.




...Ah!

I hope you don't mind me asking, but I noticed you took a photograph of the train earlier. Is photography your hobby?

A NOR-THERN FOX!?

Oh... Missed it.

I see. So you fans of the iron railway call yourselves "ironers".

Haha ha...

Iron-er!?

Oh... Uh, well, I'm a bit of an "ironer", as much as it's embar-rassing to admit at my age...

Ah-ha! So you're a re-searcher, then!
I guess you must be an "ironer" too, since you study the history of iron.
I wanted to study the Ainu "animal worship".
This trip to Hokkaido was completely unrelated to iron. I was visiting the Ainu sacred land of Nibutani.
Oh, it's only my research theme in folk-loristics.
I believe that prac-tice was widespread in pre-Shinto ancient Japan.
They believed that all animals, particularly bears, were the manifestations of gods, and coexisted with them...

But as time passed, animal worship died out, and now only meager traces of it remain...

Fushimi Inari Shrine, Sapporo

The arctic fox was so cute!

And with that in mind, my niece Taki asked me to take her to the Asahiyama Zoo in Asahikawa, and we're on our way back to Tokyo now.

Professor Munakata, would you mind listening to a personal story of mine?

The name's Tsuchiya. I run a small company in Sendai, but I was born in Hokkaido so I come here for vacations.

I'm sorry for being so abrupt, but I have a feeling a professor of folkloristics like yourself would find it of interest...

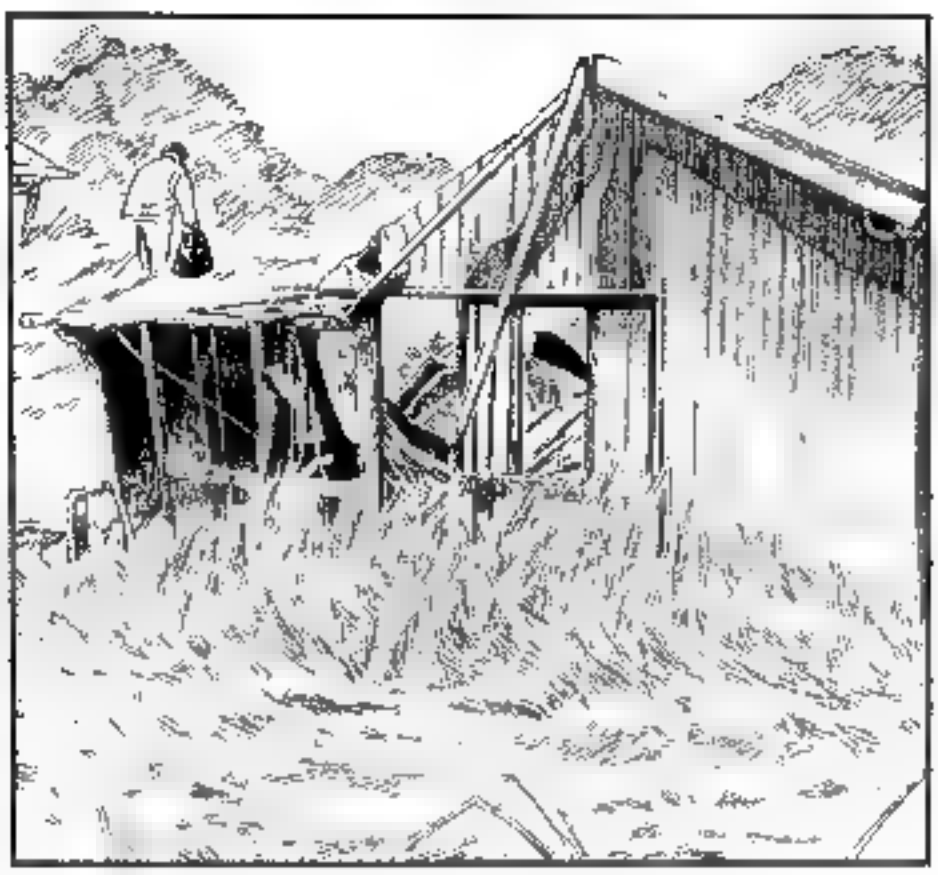
...Pardon?

This is also what made me a fan of the railroad.

Tokoro District, Hokkaido
Shumaribetsu Village

And years had passed since the village was abandoned.

I was visiting the village where I was born for the first time in about twenty years...
It was about ten years ago.

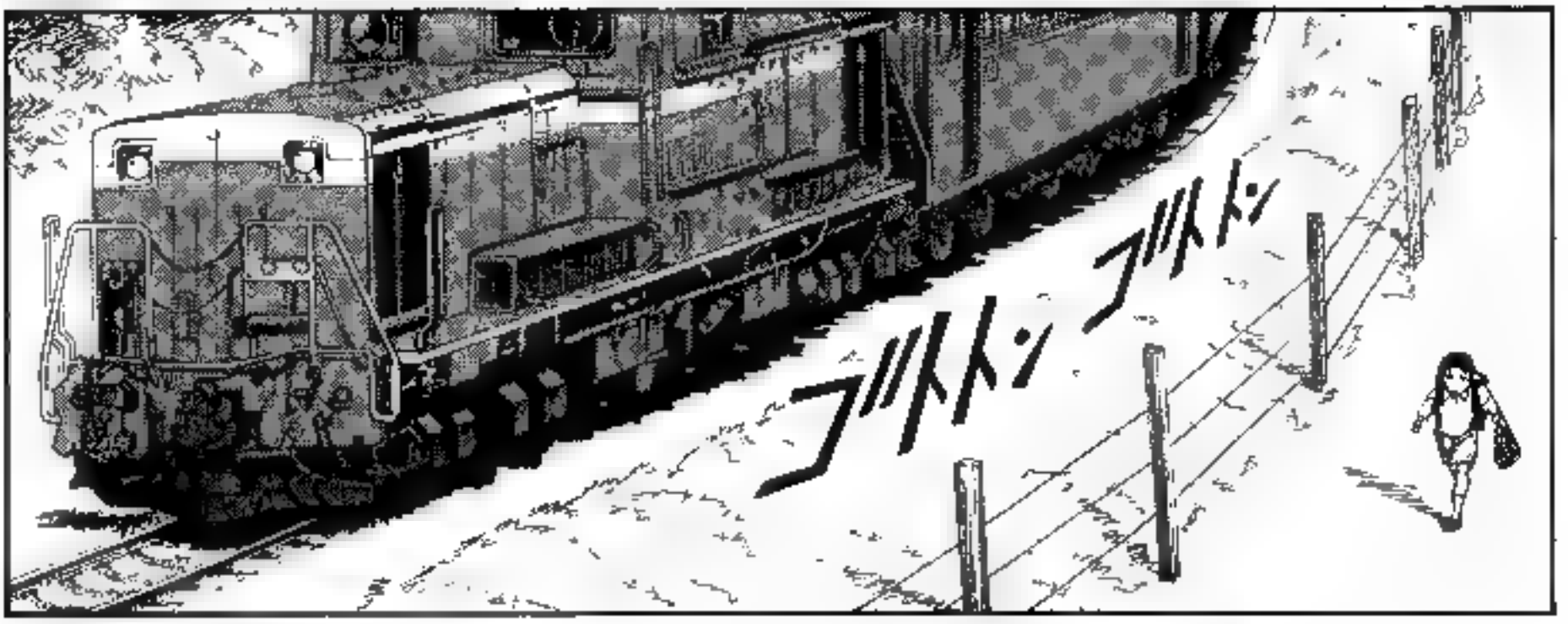


They're all going to be yours one day. You'd better take good care of them.

Look, Shinpei. Look at those big Fields.

Grand-ma! Choo-choo...

Grandma...
Mother
Father...


ゴットン ゴットン

HEY, SHINPEI! DID YOU OVER-SLEEP AGAIN?

O... Okay!
SHIN-PEI!

P... Princi-pal!
Hahaha! You'll make it on time if you run! I'll count this as sliding safe!

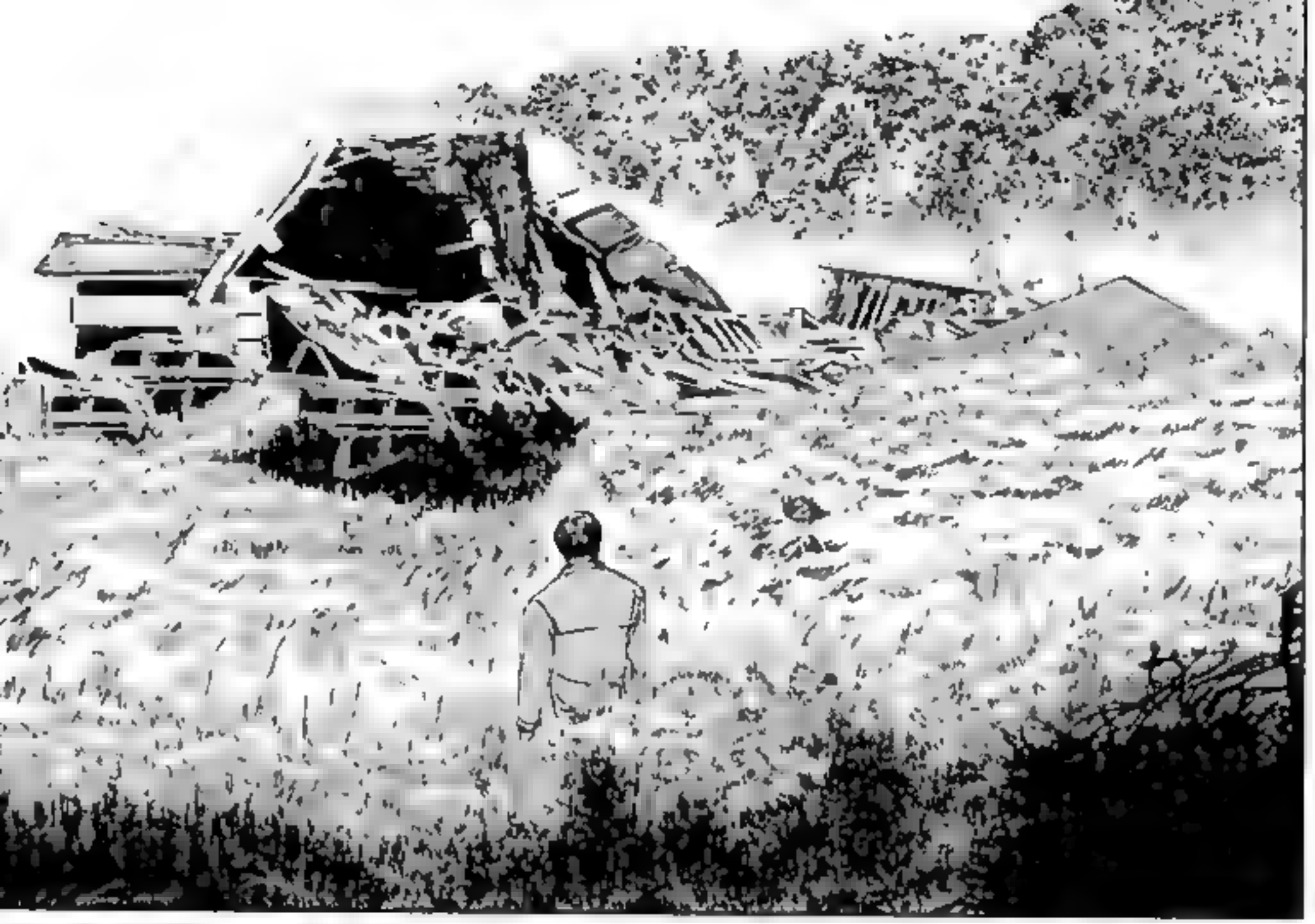
RUN, SHIN-PEI!

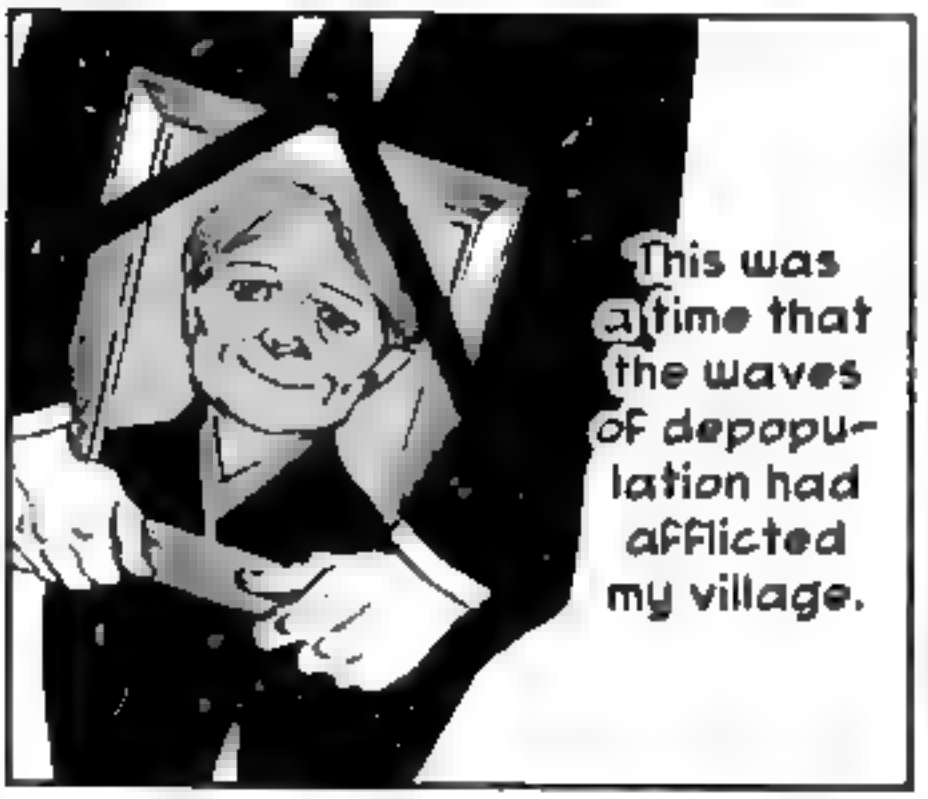
DON'T WORRY, JUST RUN!

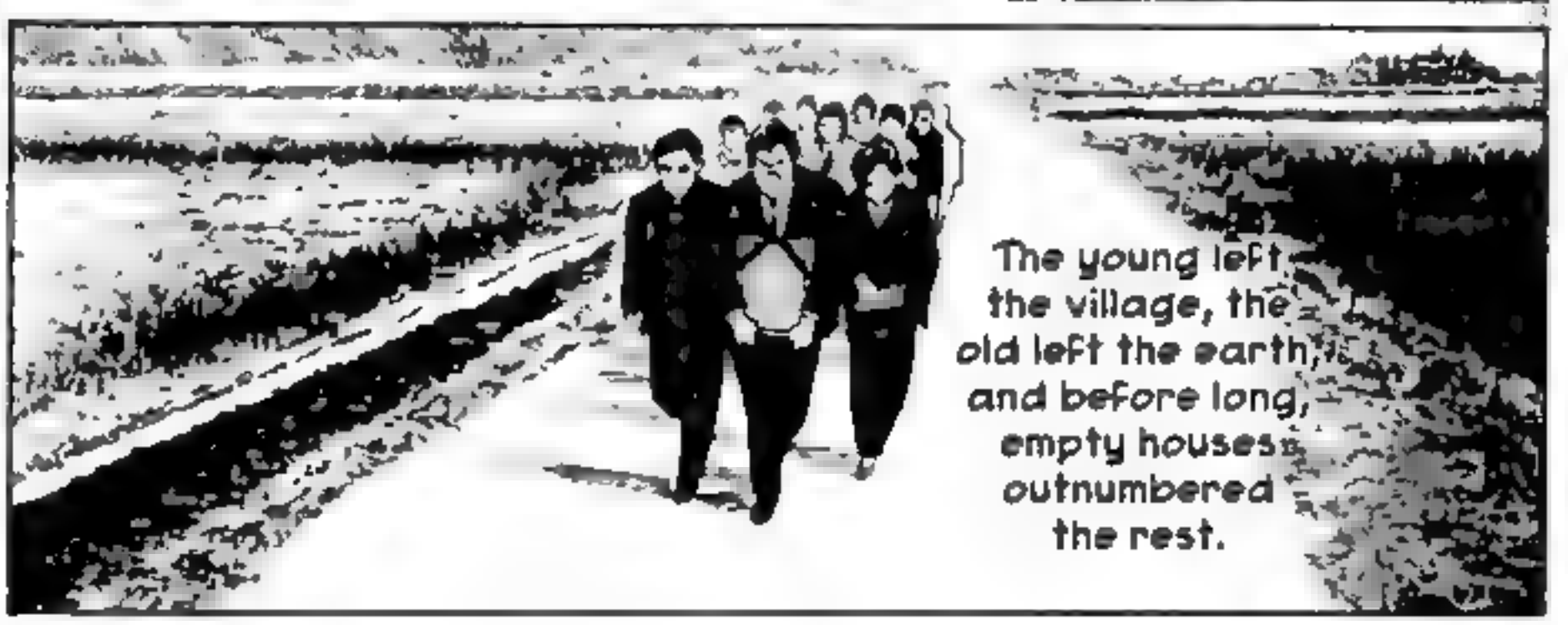
Run, Shinpei! You can run slowly if you want!

GO FOR IT, SHINPEI!

ALMOST THERE! ALMOST THERE!




This was a time that the waves of depopulation had afflicted my village.


The young left the village, the old left the earth, and before long, empty houses outnumbered the rest.

Well, you can't blame him, Foreman ...

If you leave, what will happen to the Fields? Your mother and father can't look after them forever!

I can understand why people would want to leave.

And if buses become our only [illegible] portation, one heavy snowfall will be enough to isolate us.

The railway's going to be abandoned soon enough.

IF YOU LEAVE AND THINGS DON'T WORK OUT, DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT COMING BACK!

FINE, THEN! BUT LET ME MAKE THIS CLEAR, SHIN-PEI!

IF YOU KEEP UP THAT ATTITUDE, THERE WON'T BE ANYONE LEFT IN THE VIL-LAGE!

THE VILLAGE WOULD BE WORSE OFF WITH A NO-GOOD PIECE OF SCUM LIKE YOU!

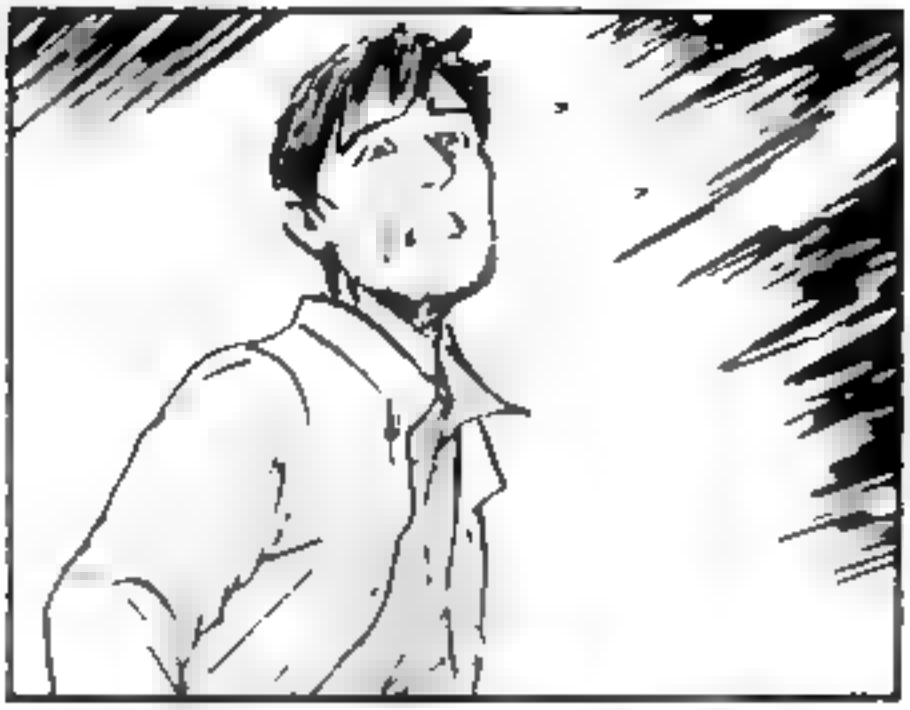
My last visit to the village was when my parents died in a bus crash two years later, and I hurried back for the funeral...

I left the village in about the same year the railway was abandoned.

I'd worked for my relatives and had finally struck out on my own with my company, but it wasn't succeeding... I was desperate for money, and my family was on the verge of collapsing

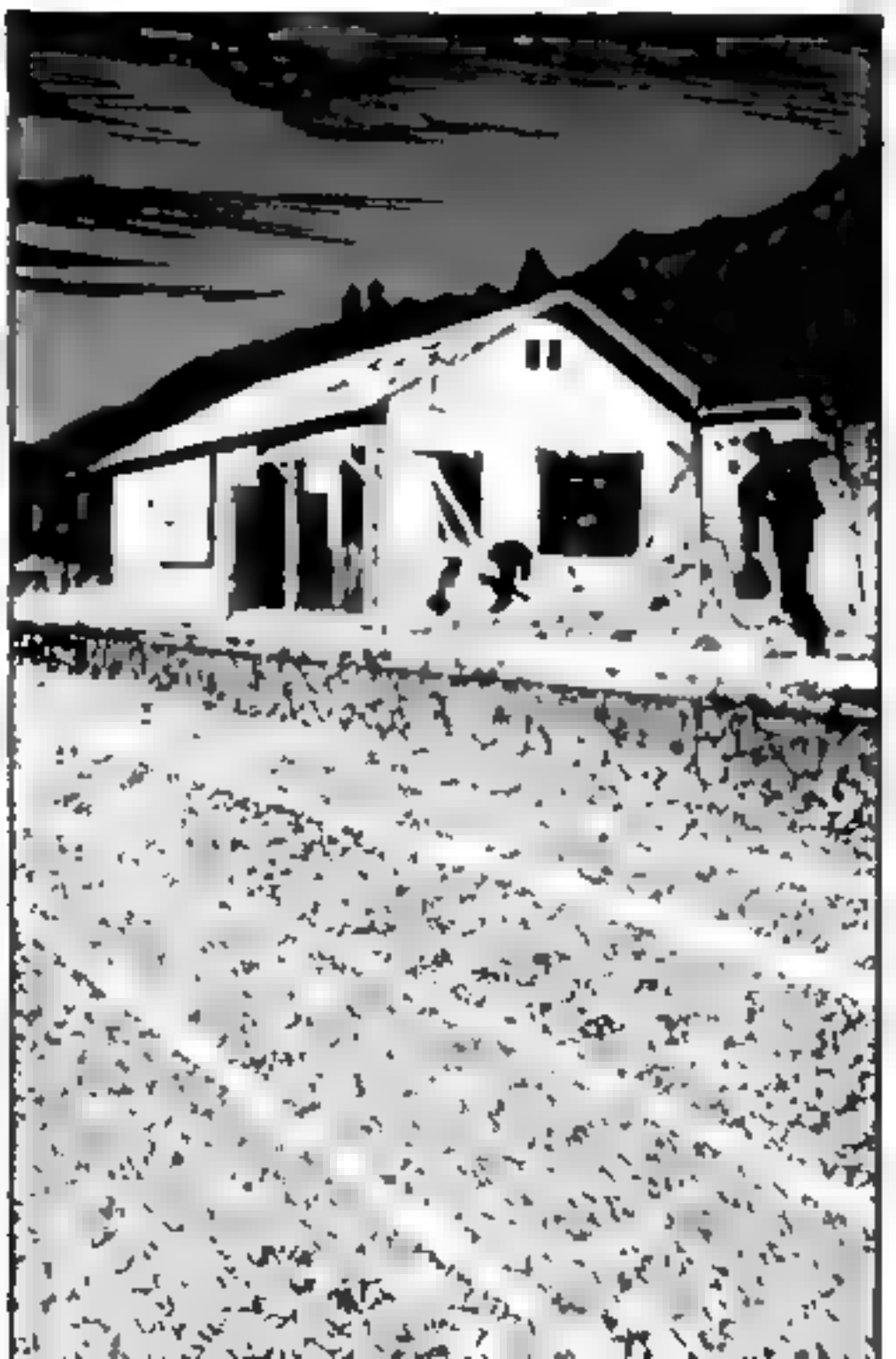
I thought that come what may, I may as well just...

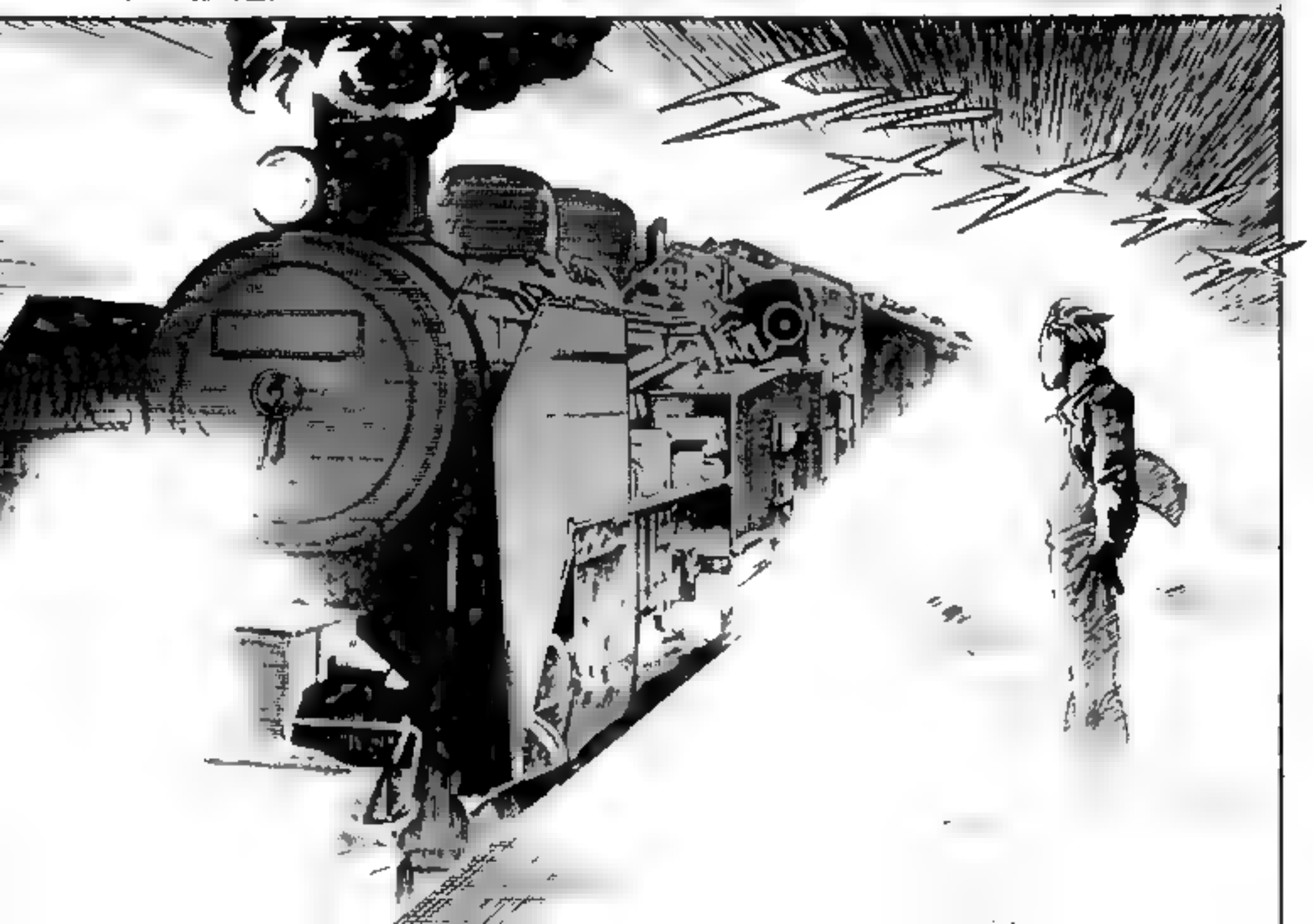
Back then, I was boxed in on all sides.



If you leave and things don't work out, don't even think about coming back!
The village would be worse off with a no-good piece of scum like you!

SHUNKIGETSU





Shinpei!

Shinpei!

Don't worry, just run!

Run, Shinpei!

You can run slowly if you want!

Go For it, Shinpei!

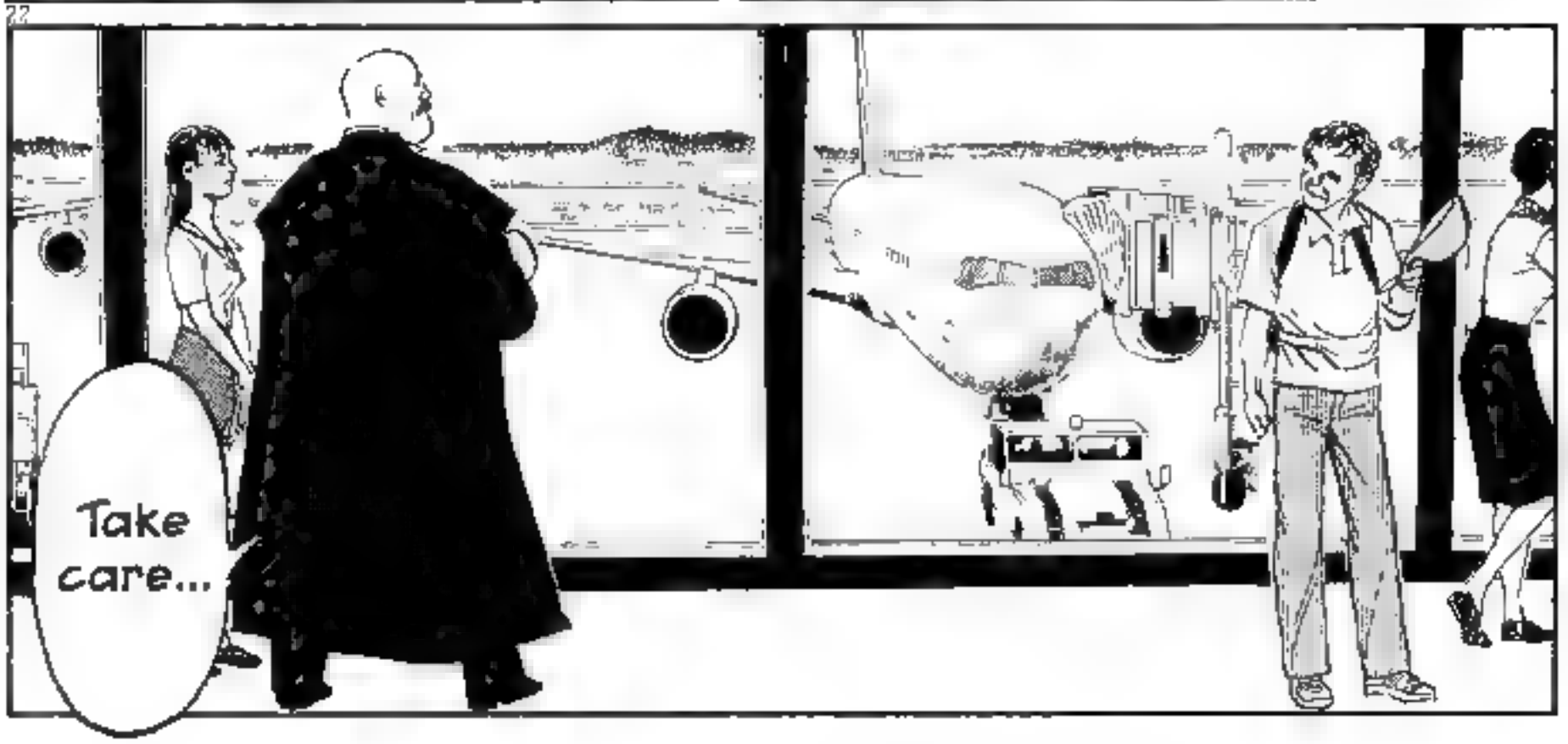
But I clearly heard and saw them.

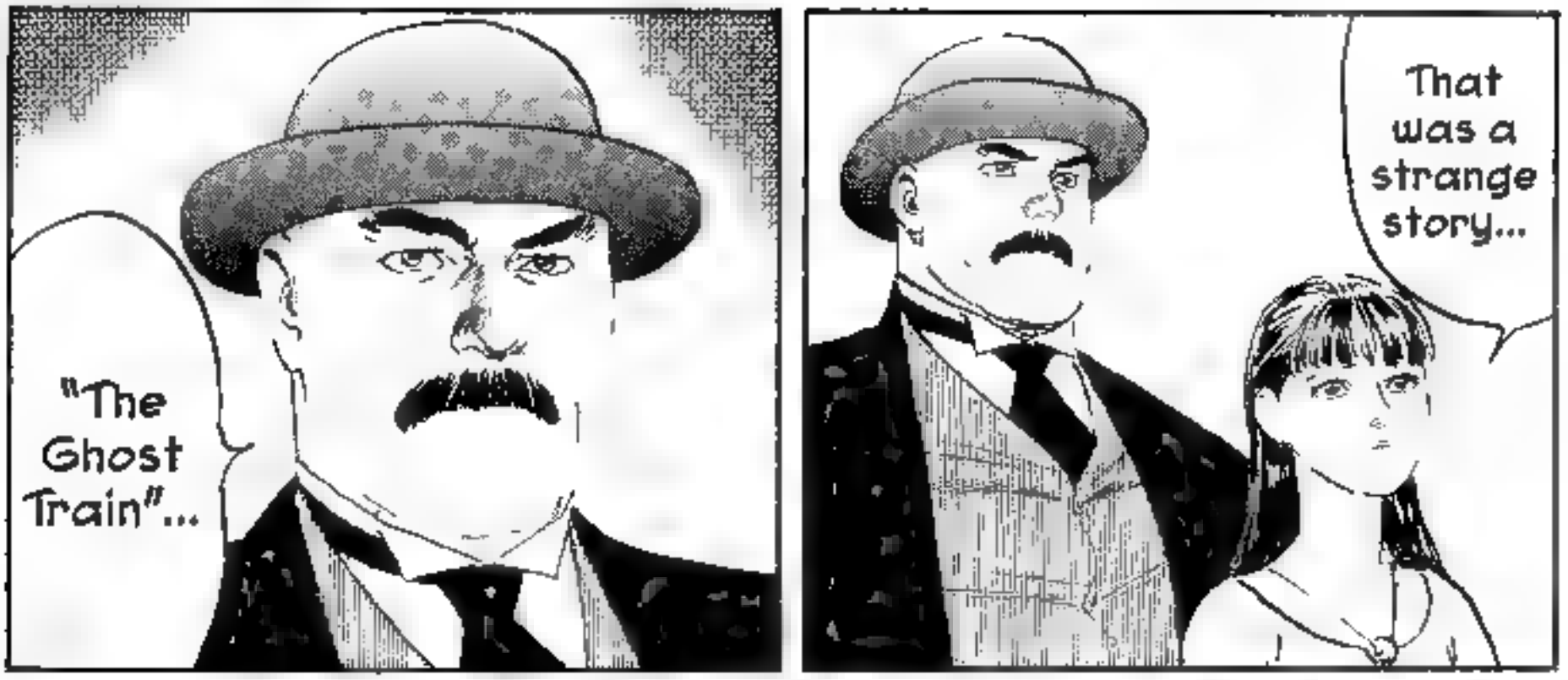
It may have been just a dream ...

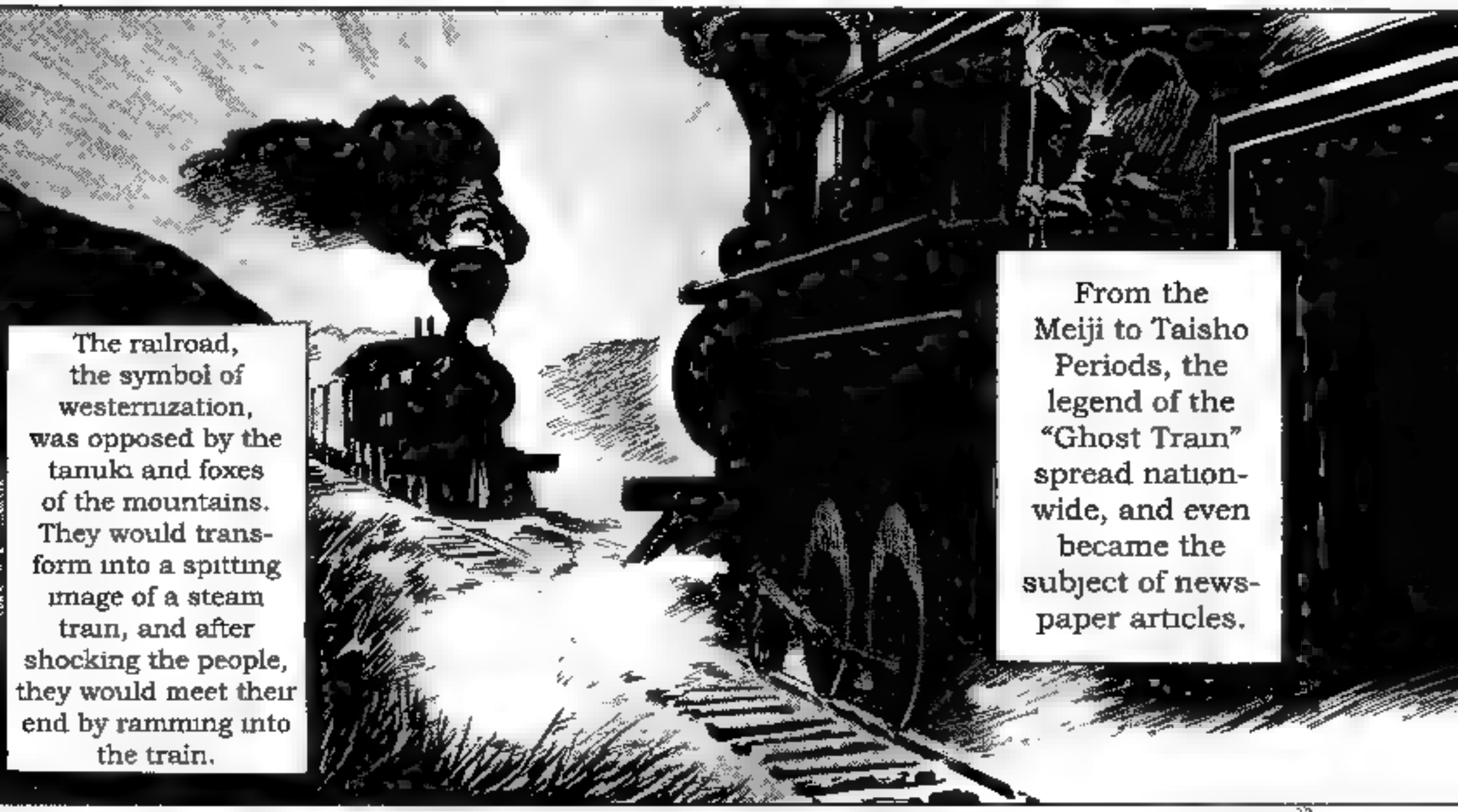
or a hallucination brought on by fatigue and alcohol.

しんちとせくうこ
新千歳空港
New Chitose Airp
みちとせ
-Chitose
After that, I turned over a new leaf, and managed to get my company running... And I even have the free time to enjoy the railroad like I'm doing now.

That's what I thought... Thanks anyway.
I don't have anything to say...
But I think that it was your own will to get back on your feet that led you to see what you did.


Take care...


"The Ghost Train"...
That was a strange story...


The railroad, the symbol of westernization, was opposed by the tanuki and foxes of the mountains. They would transform into a spitting image of a steam train, and after shocking the people, they would meet their end by ramming into the train.
From the Meiji to Taisho Periods, the legend of the "Ghost Train" spread nationwide, and even became the subject of newspaper articles.

Or perhaps it was a legend born from the anxiety and antipathy towards the "civilization" that was invading the mountain homes of the tanuki and foxes ..
This may have been a product of the imagination of people who saw animal corpses lying on the tracks

This may give rise to further legends...

As the times have changed, there are now areas where civilization has begun to retreat.

# THE CAKE RECORD OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

## CHAPTER 23

PRESENTED BY

HOKUTO NO GUN

TRANSLATED BY

SYSTEMATICCHAOS

EDITING BY

HIGHTIDE AND KAZUHIKO

PROOFREADING BY

DESTORYERRING

# CHAPTER 24:
# THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF KUROKOSHI

North Kanbara
District, Niiza Prefecture
Kurokoshi Village

So is this the Kurokoshi Mansion?

Y... Yes.

.....

This is quite the large mansion, isn't it...

.....

Professor Munakata, are you here, too ...!?

I had a bad feeling about this...

.....

We've already introduced ourselves to Dr. Imibe, but this is Professor Nagao from Nihonkai University.

And I'm his assistant, Usami.

Uhhh... Are you Professor Munakata from Tokyo? I've heard all about you.

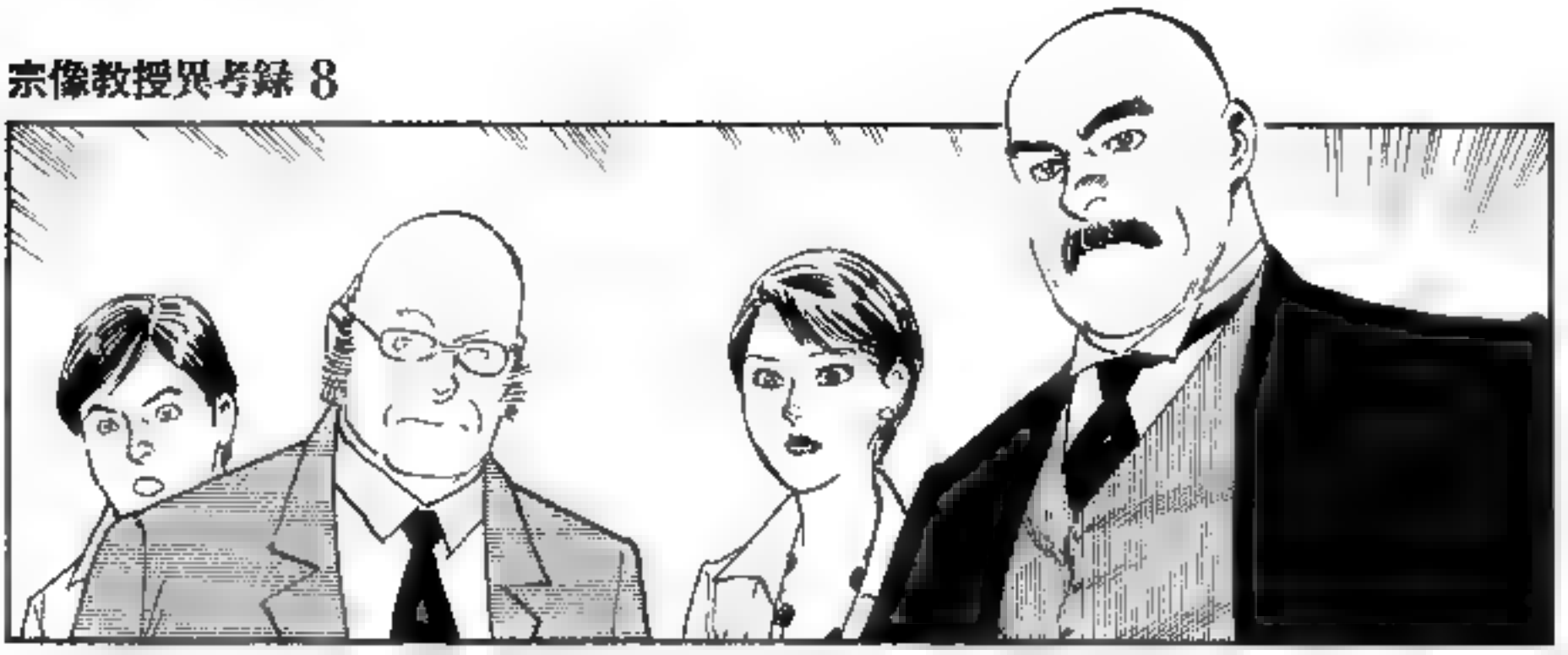
Hmm... I came here because they told me they wanted me to investigate something. Are you all here for the same reason?

Yes, basically.

And they say that they're a family that can trace themselves back to the Jomon period...

Normally I would've refused, but then I heard that the Kurokoshi of Echigo were the ones asking the favor...

I am Kurokoshi Saki... I am the one who called you all here.
I apologize for asking you to come all this way.



It is a long history. You may look into any of the archives in the storehouse, and do not hesitate if you find something inconvenient to the family.
The history ...?

First of all, Dr. Imibe Kana... I want you to investigate the history of the House of Kurokoshi.

What might that be?
Can I ask you a question?

.....

"From the province of Koshi, an offering was made of burning earth and burning water." Nihon Shoki, Seventh Year of the reign of Emperor Tenji

It's believed that this indicates that natural asphalt and petroleum unique to the Niigata area was offered to the Imperial Court.

That is what I am asking you to find out.

Some people say that it was the House of Kurokoshi that gave this seventh-century offering. Do you think it's true...?

I... I understand. This seems worth looking into.

!

What kind of special investigation?

Professor Nagao, I understand you specialize in modern history...

I'd like you to conduct a special investigation on the House of Kurokoshi during this period.

There is a large tunnel under this mansion, which I hear has traces that these activists were hidden there.

It appears that our family supported the Satsuma and Choshu activists during the late Shogunate.

So you want me to investigate the cave... I see. This sounds intriguing.

I want you to investigate the patron god of the Kurokoshi Clan, "Kuro-Nyudo".

And last, but not least, Professor Munakata...

Kuro-Nyudo...!?

They say that a bald, black, one-eyed monster that dwells in the water has brought prosperity to the Kurokoshi Clan since ancient times.

Indeed. They may have been the people involved in iron-works called "tatara", portrayed as monsters...

I've read your books on the folkloristics of iron, and they suggest that these one-eyed monsters...

Also, the action of pressing the bellows, or "stamping the tatara", can cause leg strain, and often resulted in one leg being crippled.

The "Hyottoko", likewise, comes from "hiotoko", or "Fire man", and represents the fact that it is easy to injure an eye when looking in on a fire.

When the villagers witnessed these people in the mountains, they came up with one-eyed and one-legged monsters such as the "One-Legged Datara" or the "One-Eyed Child".

and meanwhile in Sado, there is the legend of the one-eyed Nyudo that lives in the lake...

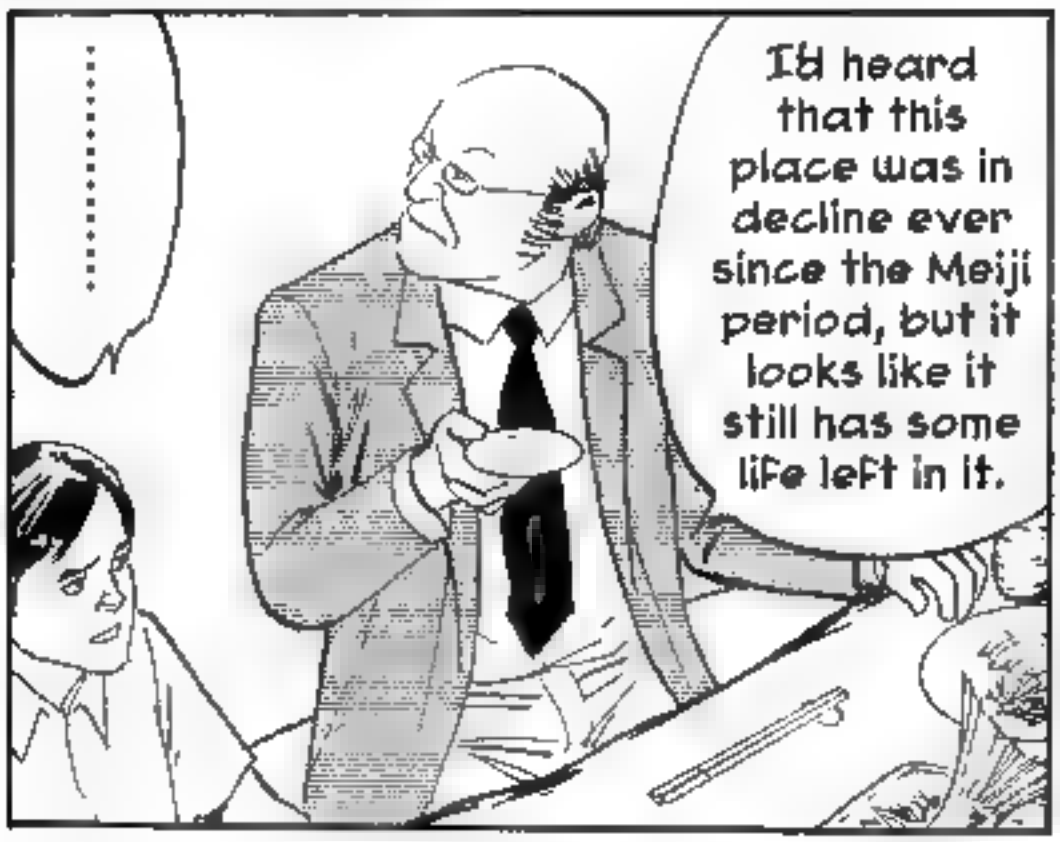
And in Niigata specifically, Kashiwazaki is the site of the biggest iron-work ruins discovered in Japan...

But we still have our own schedules to consider. Let us look into it a little before we...

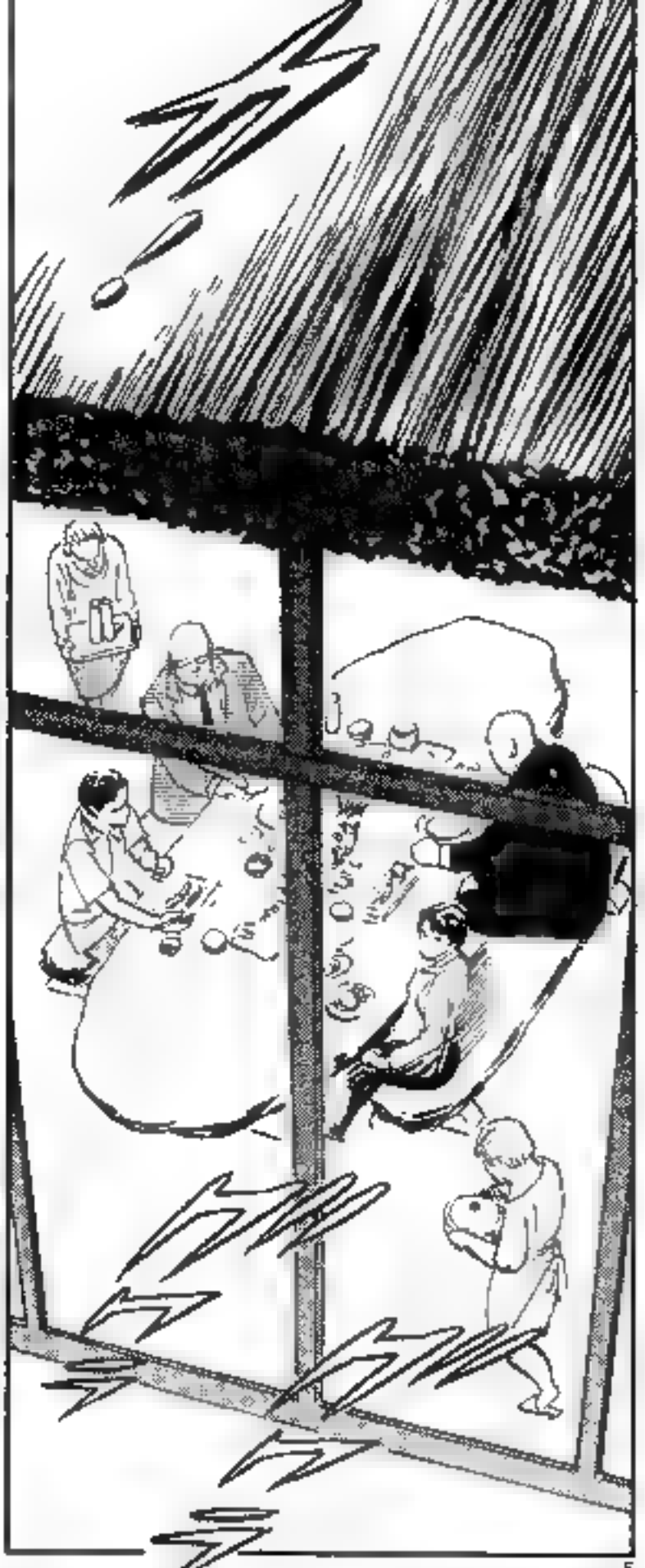
Will you accept this request? I don't mind giving any of you room and board for a few days, and Tsukioka here can provide you with anything you need.

14

Dinner should be ready by now. I'm afraid I'm on an invalid diet, so you'll have to excuse me now...


.....
I'd heard that this place was in decline ever since the Meiji period, but it looks like it still has some life left in it.

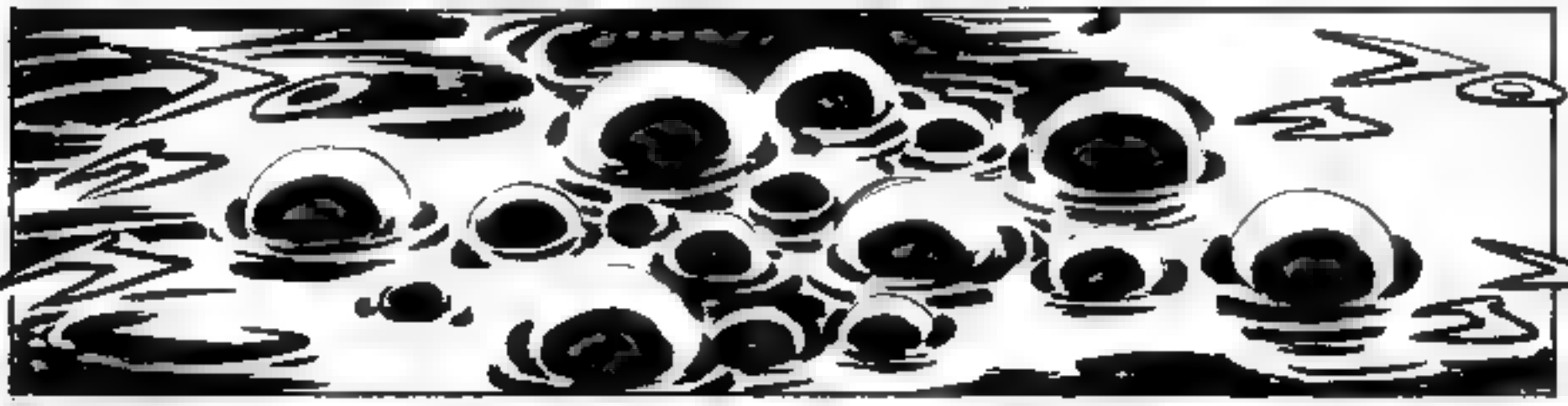
This mansion is almost like a heap of Japanese history... You don't get a chance like this very often.



Kusou-zu!?

Well, you're eating quite well, considering that.
That's "kusou-zu".

Aren't you all bothered by the scent in the air? It's worse than cigarette smoke, and it's spoiling my dinner.



As you know, the area from Niigata to Akita is a petroleum-producing region, and crude oil occasionally seeps out of the ground around here.
Even the well water smells too much of petroleum to be drinkable. Before the water-works, we had to have people carry water from the nearby village...
We call the lakes tainted with this foul-smelling petroleum "Kusouzu".

Incre-
dible...

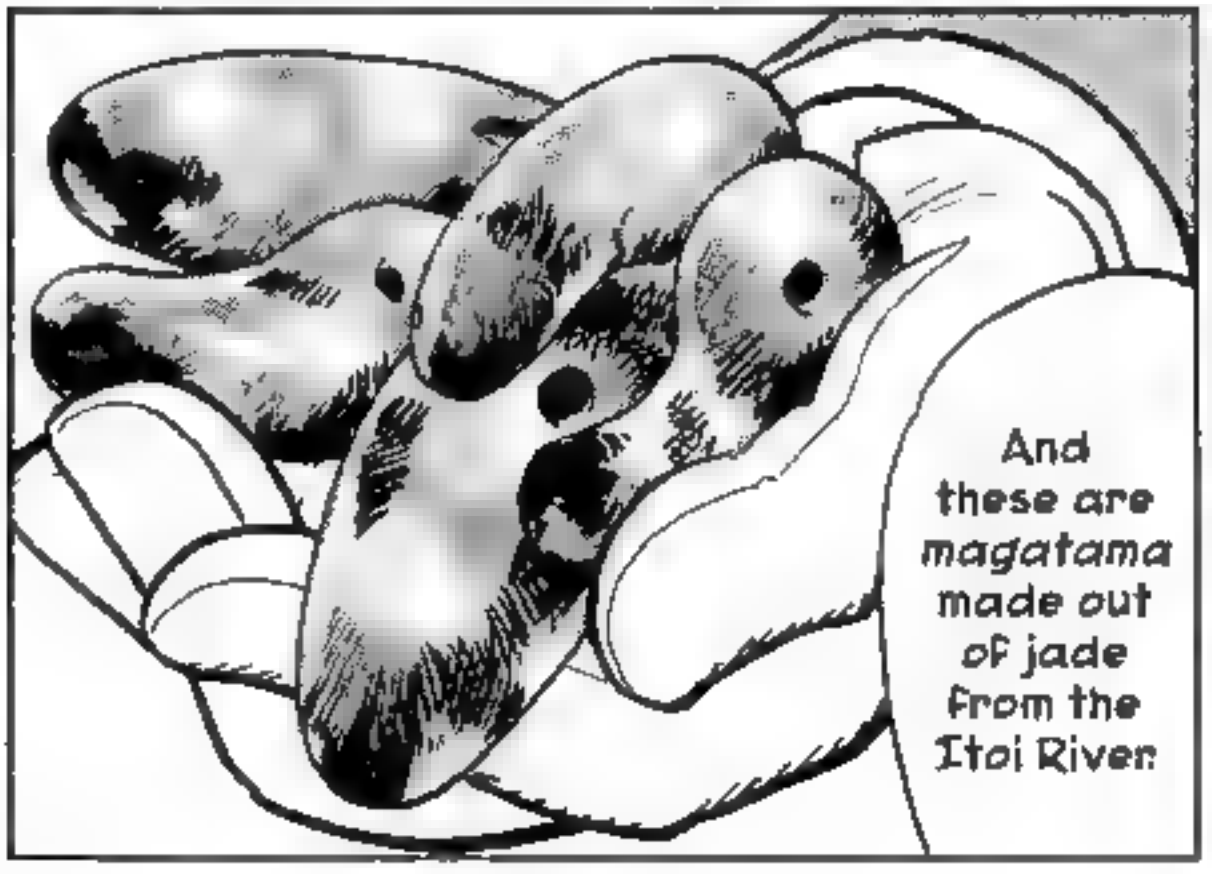
It looks like the archives and letters date all the way back to the Kamaku-ra Period...

18

Is that Jomon pottery?
There seems to be some kind of black lump inside...

There are even older-looking artifacts over here ...

This is the "burning earth"... Natural asphalt. I hear that it's the substance left over after the volatile components have evaporated from the kusouzu on the surface.


And these are magatama made out of jade from the Itoi River

20

This would mean that the Province of Koshi was a trade center on the Sea of Japan ever since the Jomon Period.

Asphalt from Niigata and Akita has been discovered in Jomon ruins further north in Tohoku, and jade from the Itoi River region was manufactured and taken all over the nation.

This is coated in asphalt as well... It was used as an adhesive to affix arrowheads, and as a caulking.

A...And it was the House of Kurokoshi that profited from this trade ...!?

So their claim of tracing their lineage back to the Jomon Period is no exaggeration!!

This way, Professor Munakata...

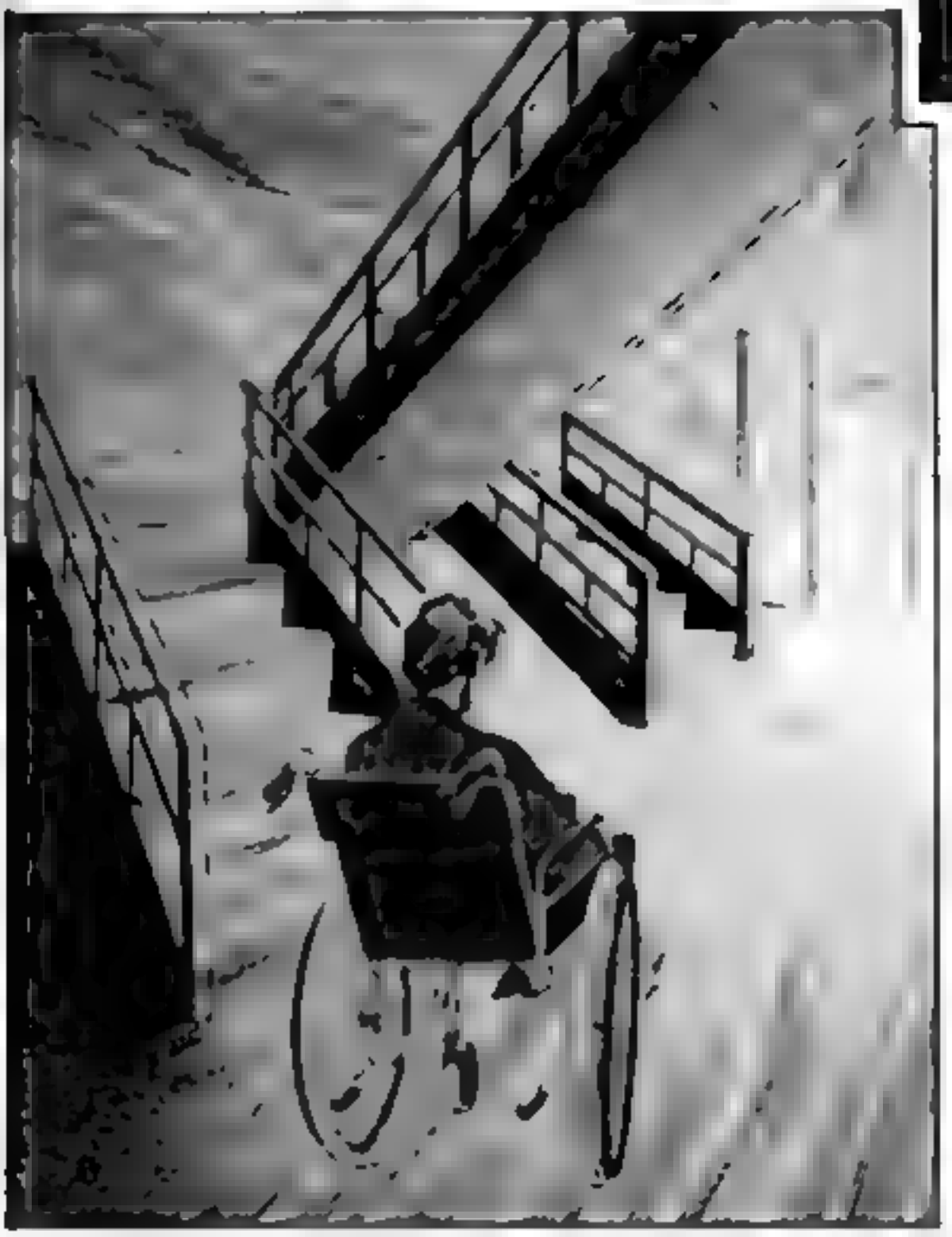
The stone statue has been coated in asphalt, and it has jade for the eye... It represents the gifts of the Kuro-Nyudo.

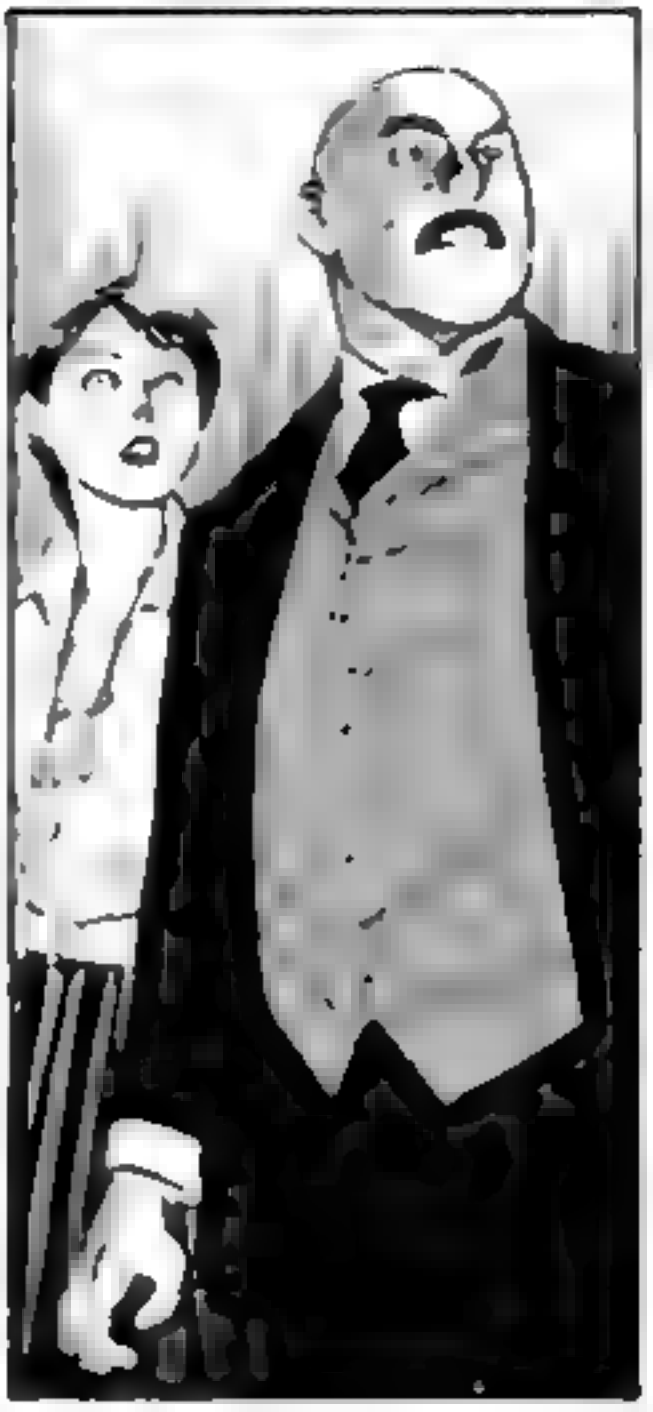
This is a statue of the Kuro-Nyudo, the patron deity of the House of Kurokoshi.

23

KIIII

I see...





Kurokoshi Village,
North Kanbara District, Niigata Prefecture

They hid late-Shogunate activists in here? As if! There's no signs of anyone having hidden in here!

We came here for the House of Kurokoshi's modern unreleased documents, anyway.

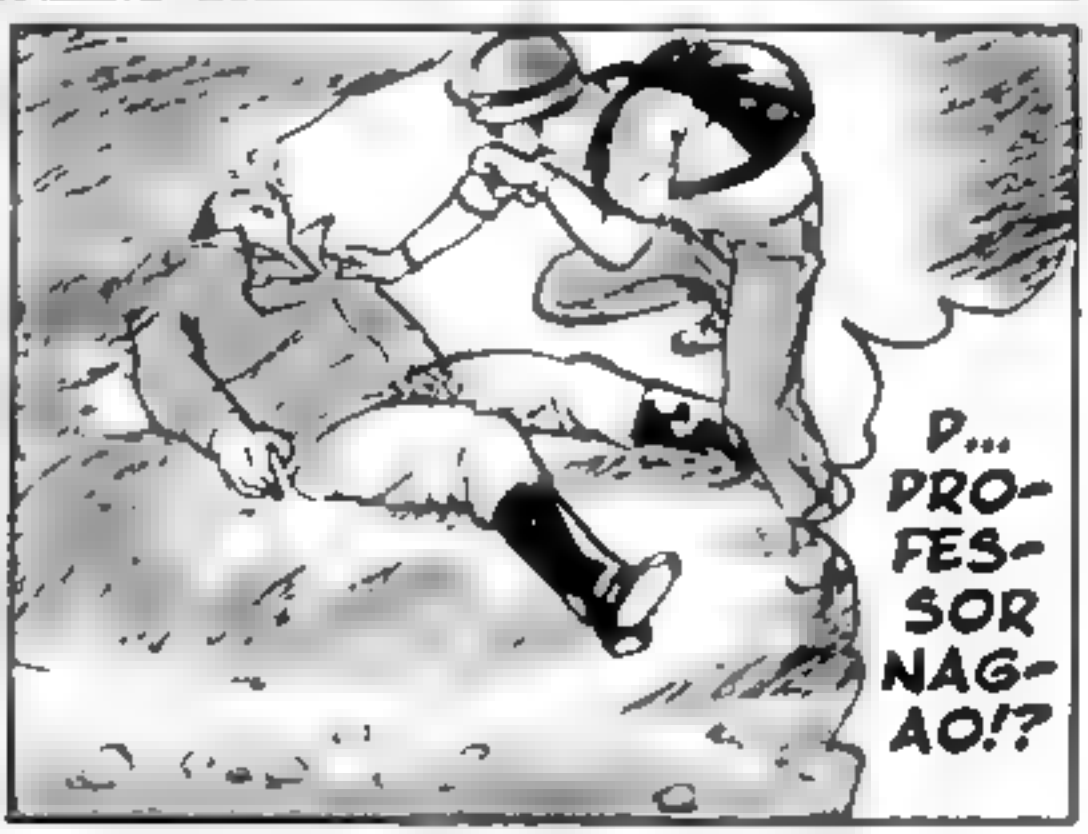
Let's wrap up here and go back to the archives.

T...The circulation's really bad in here, Professor. I'm starting to get a headache ...

:)

There's "kusouzu" here, too!
And there's natural gas bubbling up from it!

PRO-FES-SOR !!


D... PRO-FES-SOR NAG-AO!?

ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ

You have my apologies... We use some of this gas as fuel to heat the boilers and such, but we never knew it was in the caves, as well...

It seems the cave was filled with gas, and he suffered mild suffocation. Usami's been taken with him to the hospital, just to be safe...

There's petroleum and gas gushing out of the lake in this garden, as well.

Indeed... It's known as a "spouting basin". It's a place where gas spouts out quite intensely...

Natural gas is not poisonous in and of itself; and as it is lighter than air; there is little risk of it catching fire in open air...
but regardless, I believe it would be for the best that we did not remain here too long ..

It doesn't make sense that they would ask an outsider to investigate their patron god, this "one-eyed Kuro-Nyudo" in the first place.

What do they have to gain by having its identity uncovered? People usually want to their ancestors' faiths untouched.

I studied the area's folklore materials in the local library today... and I found something strange.

Strange ?

But I think that most people wouldn't want others to know things that could be shameful.

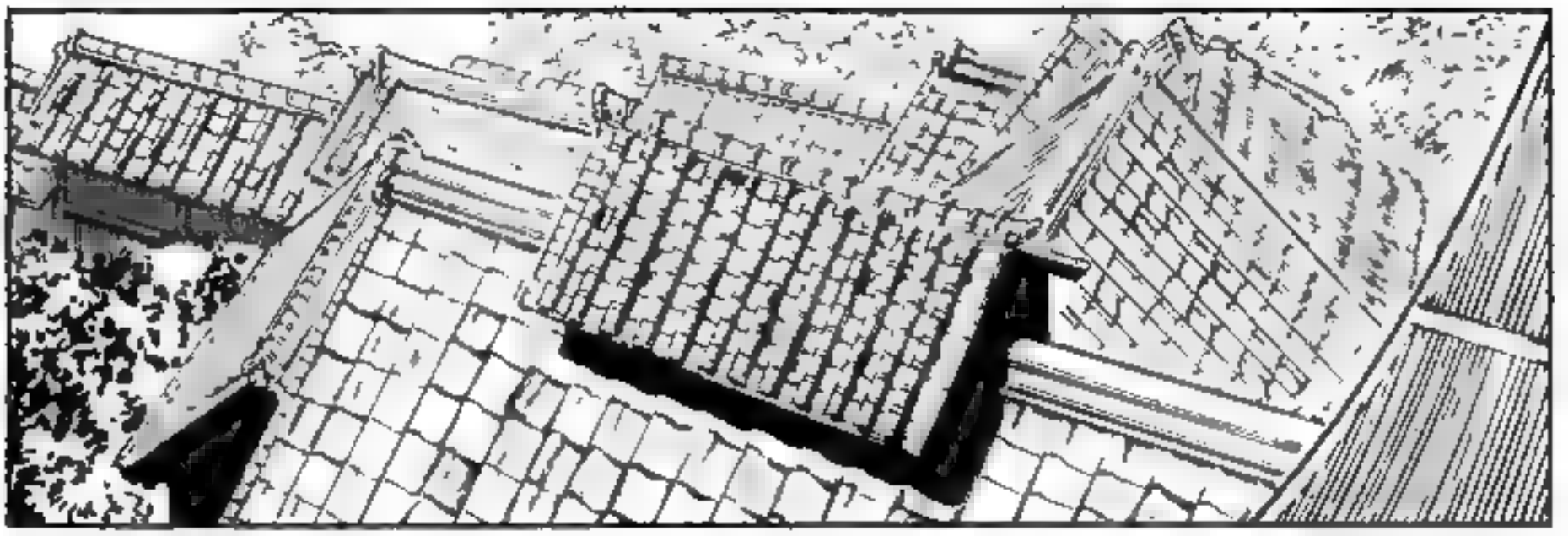
They told me to investigate the House of Kurokoshi's history... and not to hesitate if I found something inconvenient to the family...

I felt the same.

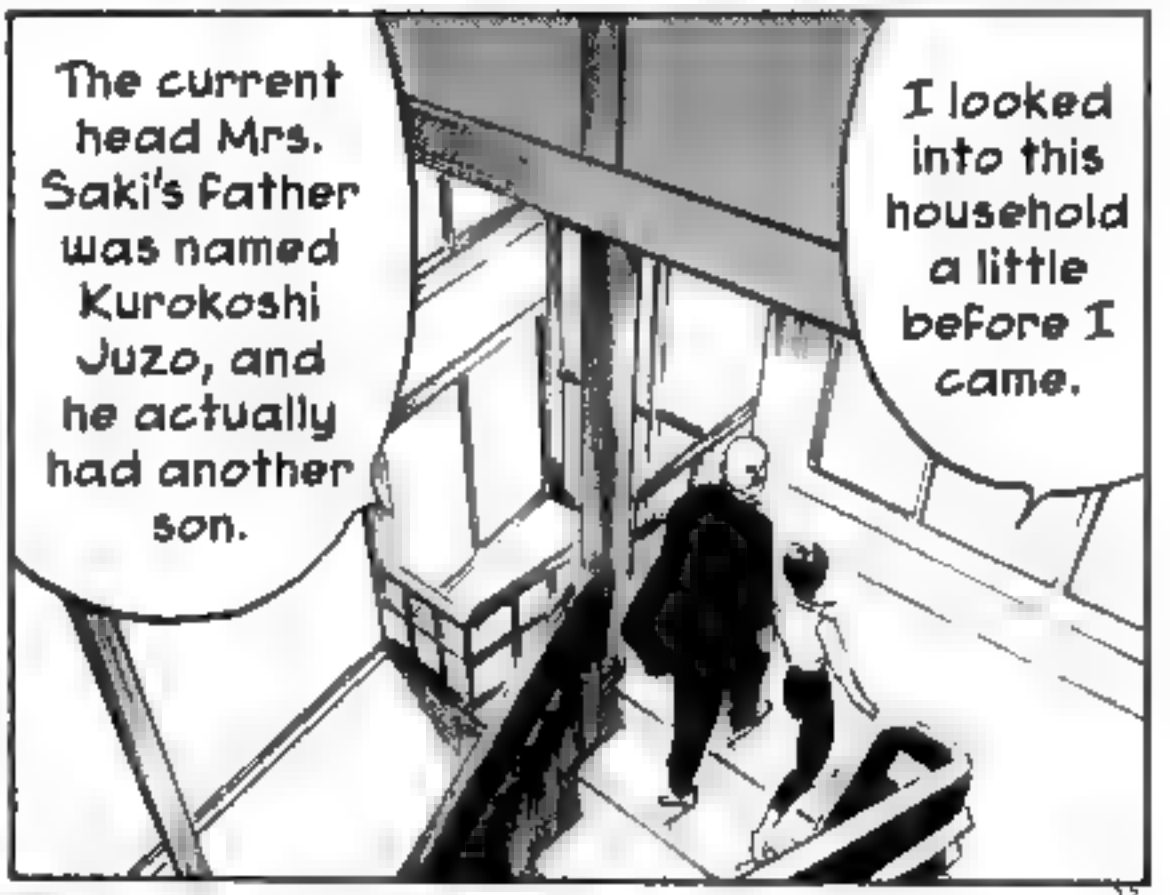
32

A lot more... Not that I mind. I'm enjoying myself

There's more to this.

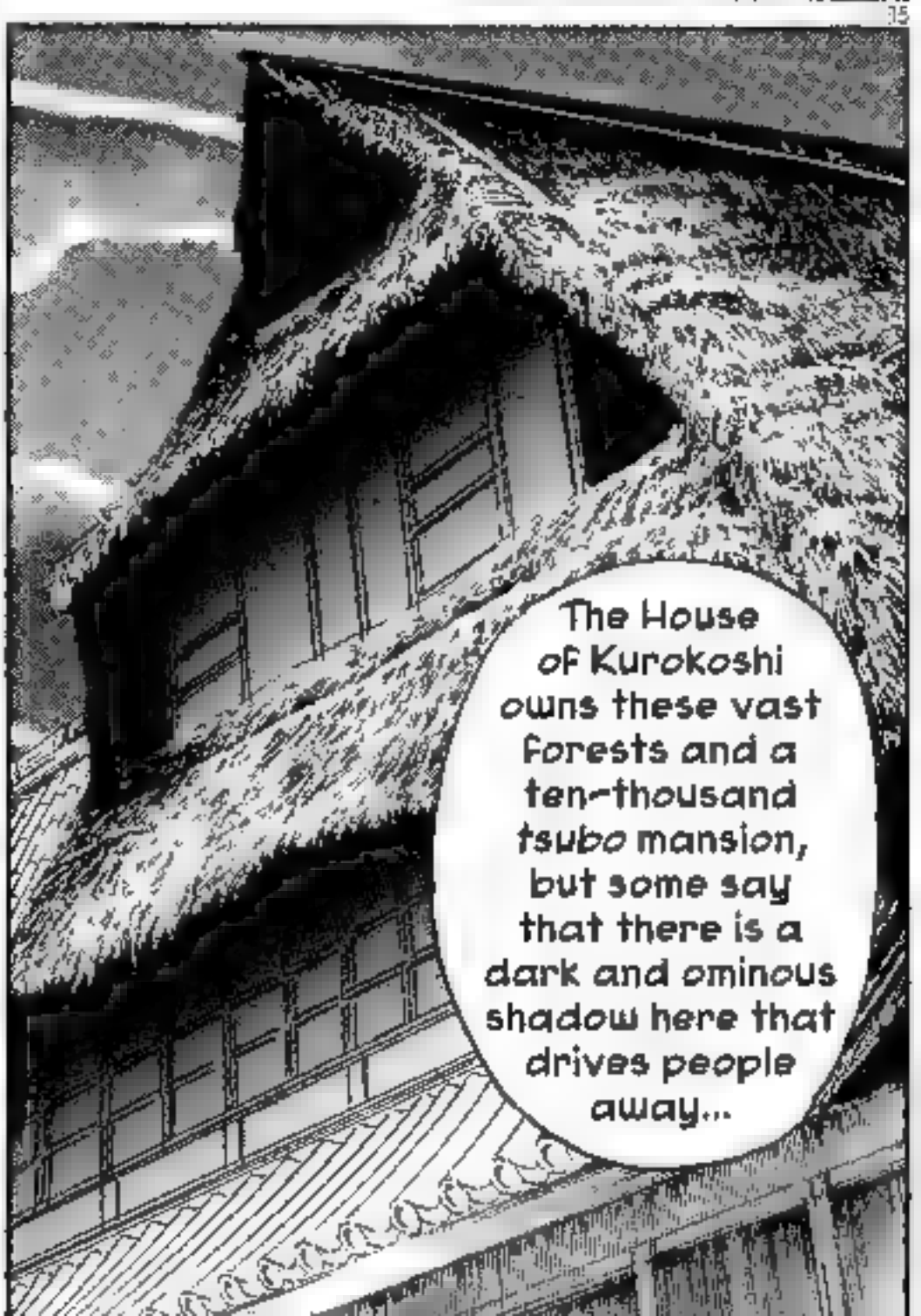


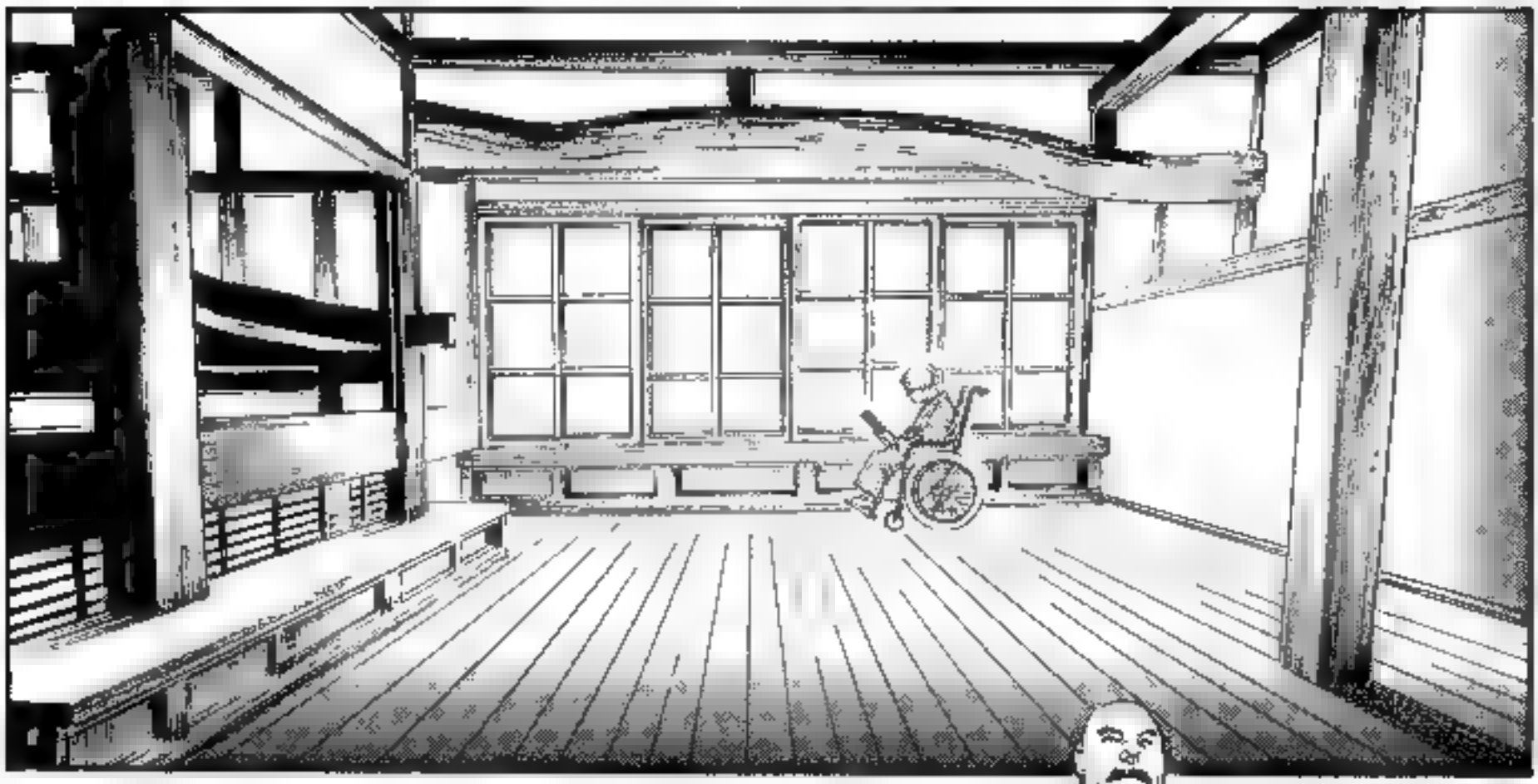
Kurokoshi Imahito. He's Mrs. Saki's older brother; but from a different mother...


The current head Mrs. Saki's father was named Kurokoshi Juzo, and he actually had another son.
I looked into this household a little before I came.

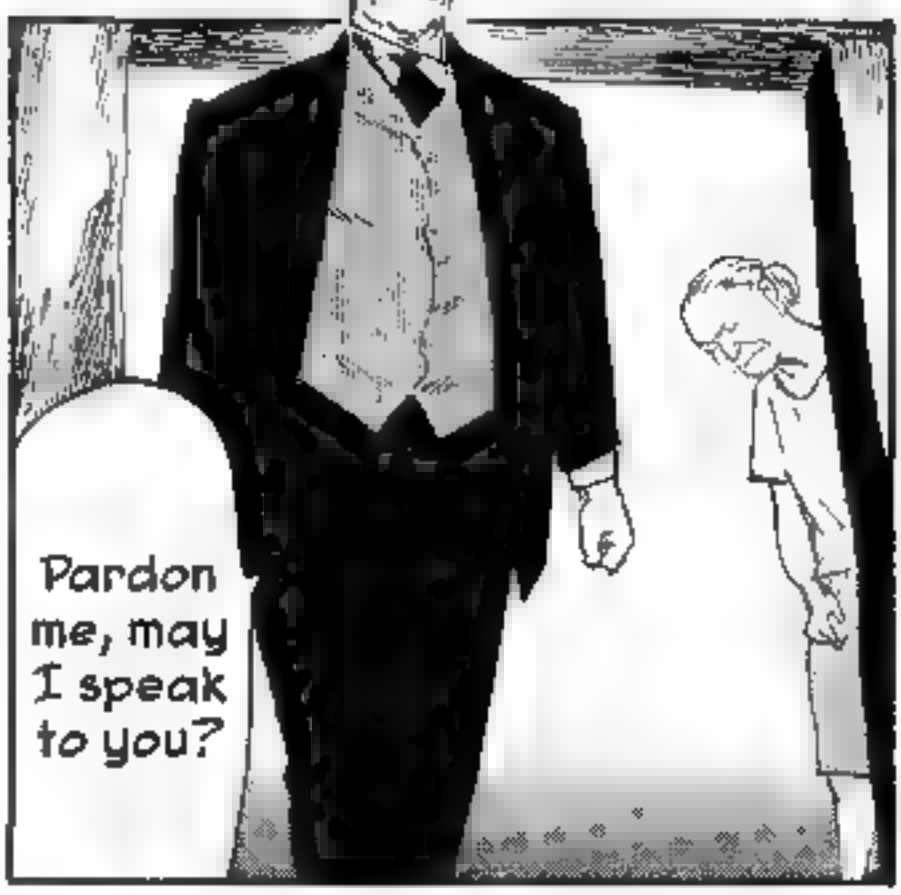
He went to Tokyo for university, but he went missing while returning home in the summer of his fourth year... This was 45 years ago.
Miss-ing...?

So his one last relative, Mrs. Saki, inherited the headship of the house-
say he threw himself in in a fit of delirium, and they never found his body...

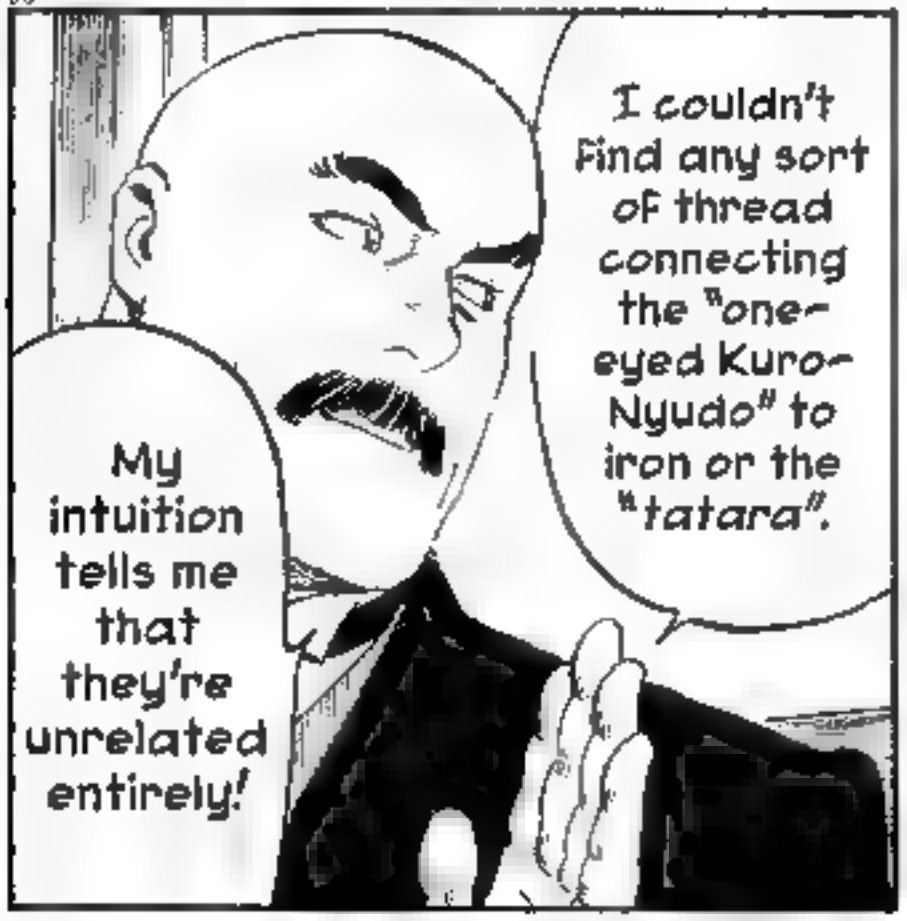

The House of Kurokoshi owns these vast forests and a ten-thousand *tsubo* mansion, but some say that there is a dark and ominous shadow here that drives people away...

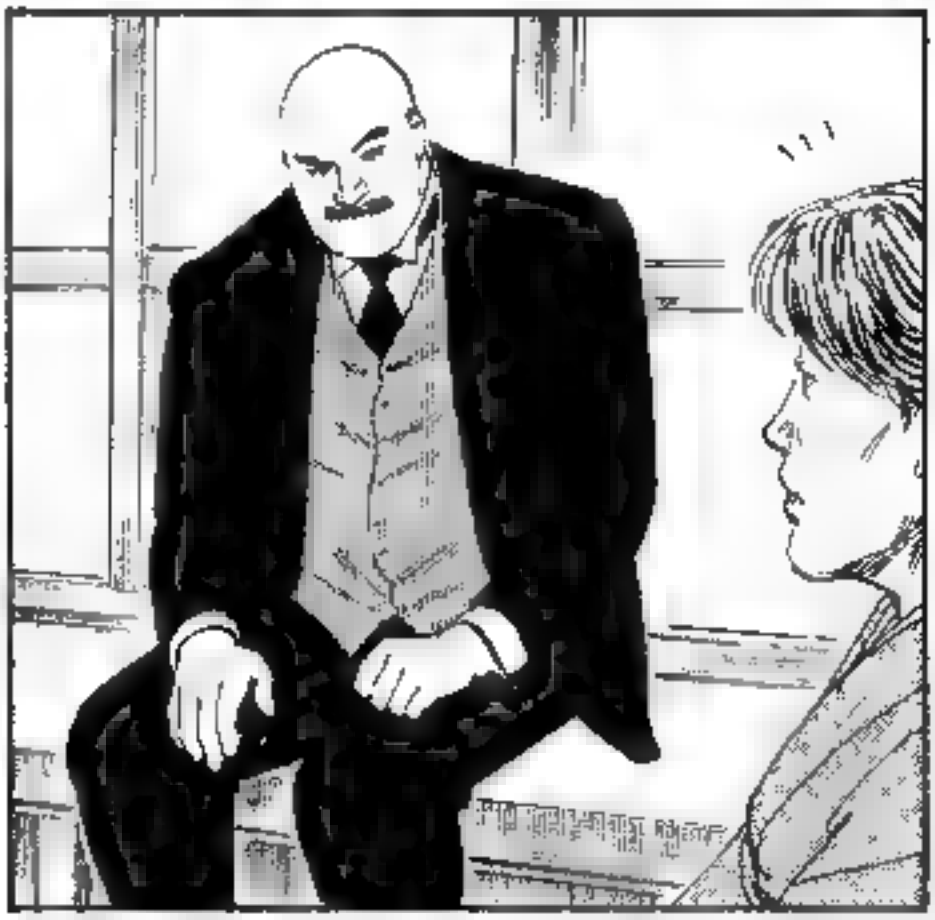


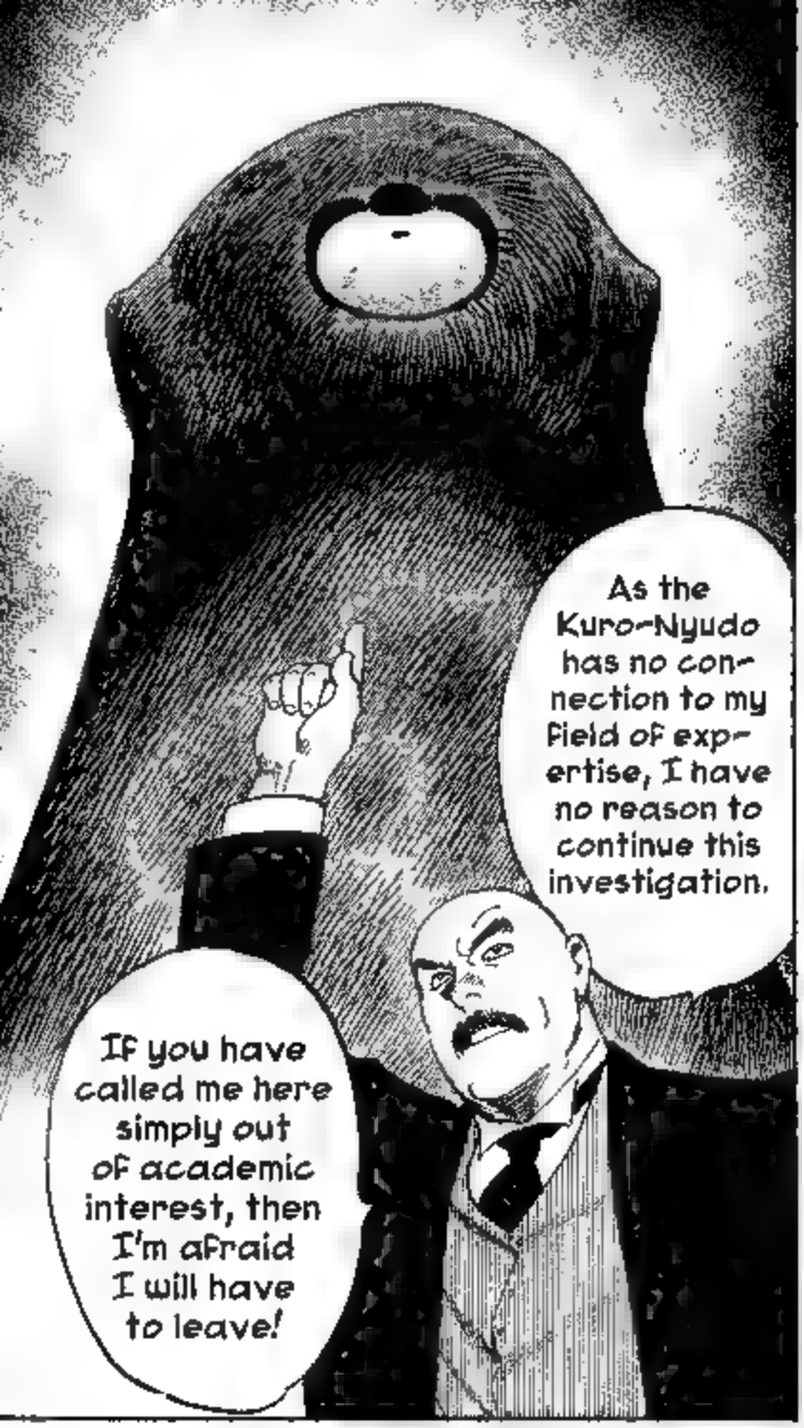
Would you like some tea, Professor Muna-kata?
No, no, I'm fine.


Pardon me, may I speak to you?

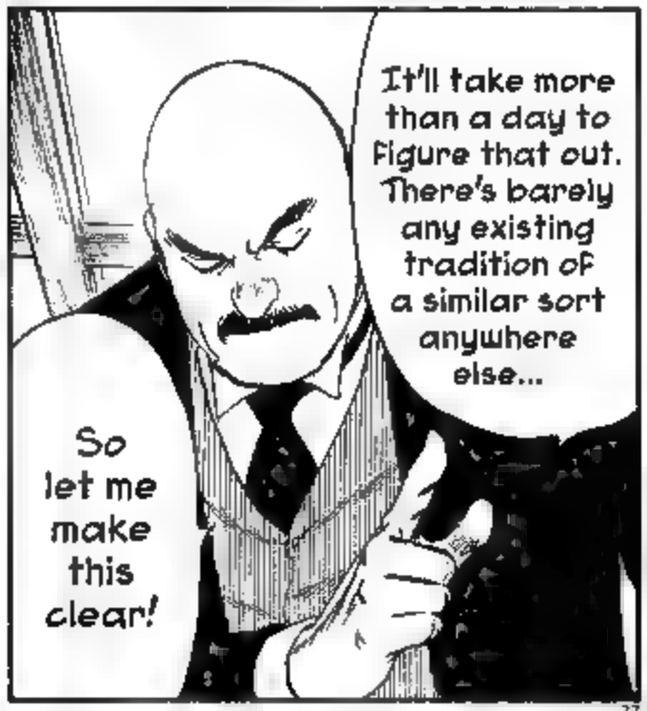



I couldn't find any sort of thread connecting the "one-eyed Kuro-Nyudo" to iron or the "tatara".
My intuition tells me that they're unrelated entirely!




As the Kuro-Nyudo has no connection to my field of expertise, I have no reason to continue this investigation.
If you have called me here simply out of academic interest, then I'm afraid I will have to leave!

Oh, my... Then what is it related to?


It'll take more than a day to figure that out. There's barely any existing tradition of a similar sort anywhere else...
So let me make this clear!

37

But if there is another reason you want me to investigate the Kuro-Nyudo, I'd like you to tell me now...

That is my brother, Imahito... This photograph was taken 45 years ago, the year he disappeared.

.....

I was excited over his return that summer vacation, but my brother appeared lost in thought. He was sitting right there, just like you are doing now...

38

It's this smell... The smell of the *kusouzu* is deeply ingrained in the people and the house...

I know what the Kuro-Nyudo is! If I can just let it loose, I can end the abominable history of this house!

It's the only way!

Ima-hito...

I don't want to live in this house anymore, and I don't want to make you live here either Saki...

I'll tear this house down!

IMA-HITO!?

Ima-hito...?

Do you think he might still be alive...?

That night, he vanished...

We searched the nearby mountains and sea, but could not find him.

But where did he go... and why...?

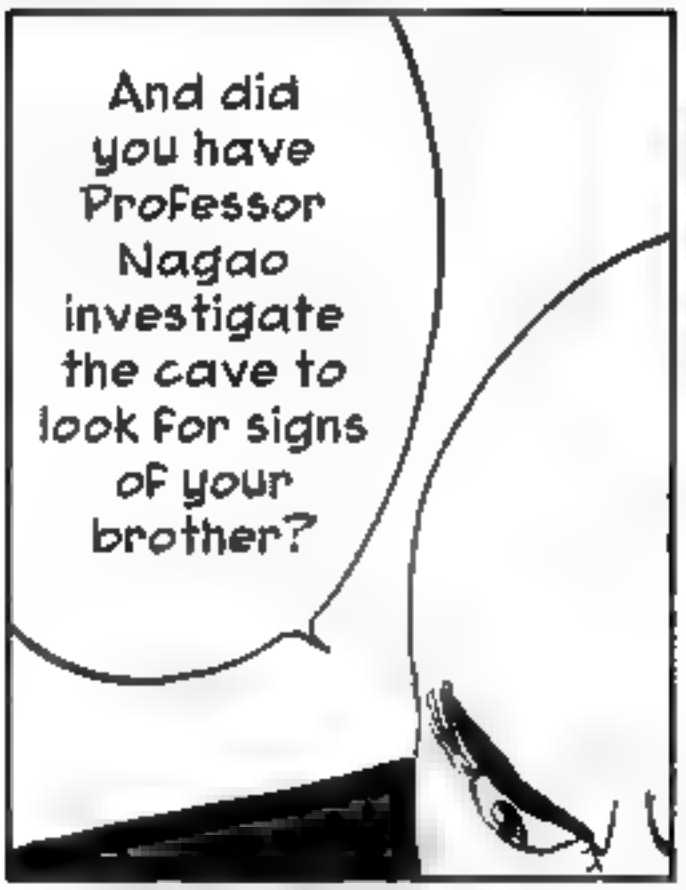
And at the very least, I want to reclaim at least a fragment of his bones.

No... Too much time has passed to think that...

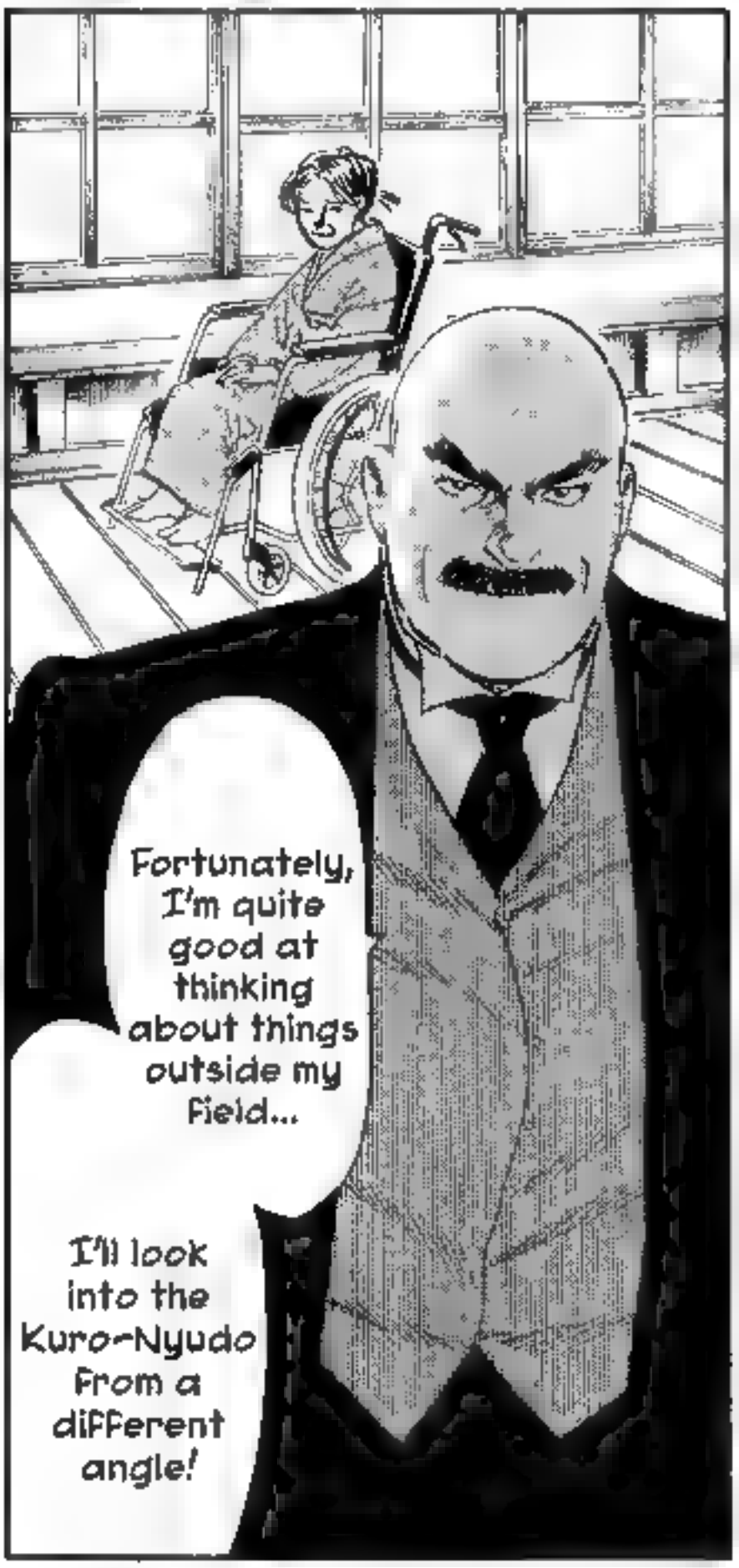
40

So the Kuro-Nyudo is a clue that could lead to him.

My brother found out the identity of the Kuro-Nyudo, and vanished...

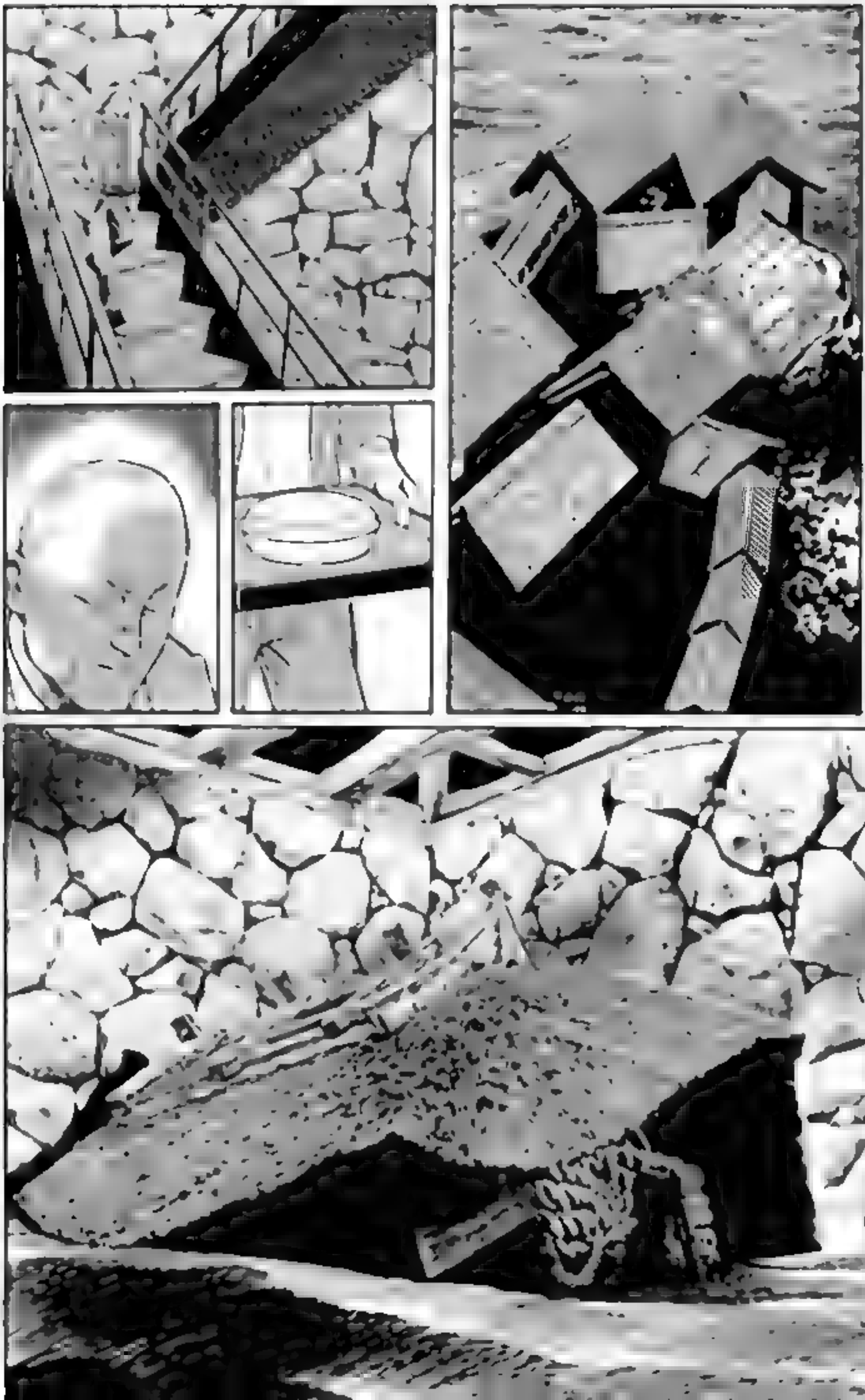

And did you have Professor Nagao investigate the cave to look for signs of your brother?

Frankly, I didn't think you would even come...
And you called a university professor just for that?


Fortunately, I'm quite good at thinking about things outside my field...
I'll look into the Kuro-Nyudo from a different angle!

I'm afraid I can't search those caves myself...

41



And it seems that petroleum was still a valuable resource to the House of Kurokoshi, even after the days of using asphalt as adhesives for arrowheads.

I've skimmed through the main documents ...

For instance, in the Warring States Period, there is a record of them selling it to Uesugi Kenshin.

They used petroleum to keep the flames lit in the camp, even in rain.

In the Edo Period, they built a fortune with their Sea of Japan trade, and studied methods of refining petroleum.

And the Meiji Period was when petroleum drilling began in earnest.

Attention was placed on Niigata and Akita's petroleum as a fuel for modern weaponry, and the House of Kurokoshi invested all their wealth in drilling.

"Human sacri-fice"...!?

And the near-by Kurokoshi village pros-pered greatly from the House of Kurokoshi, the greatest merchants in Echigo...

But there's one thing that wor-ries me.

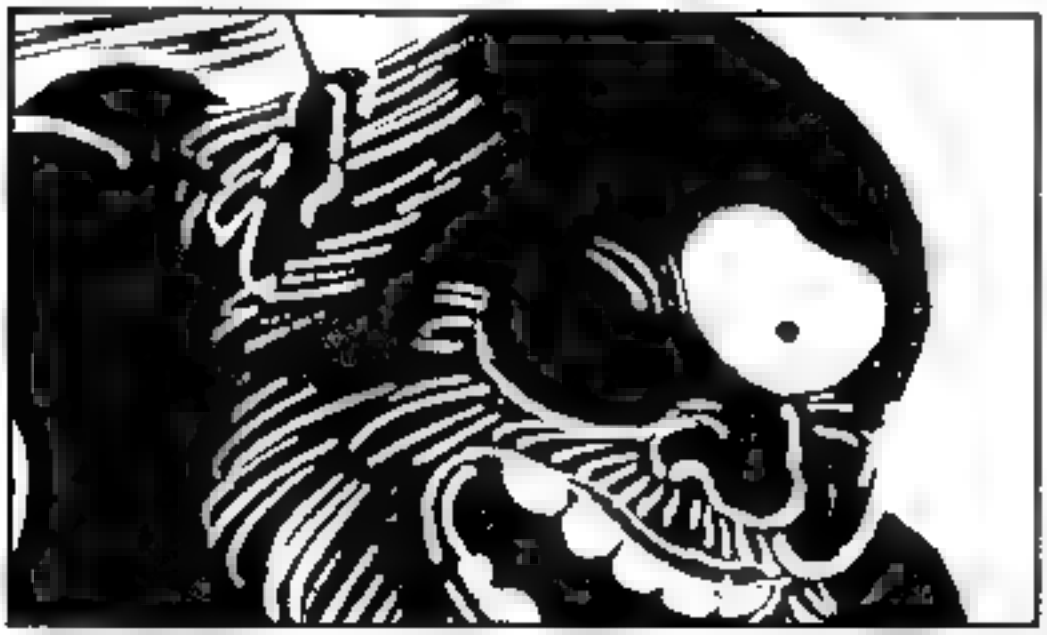


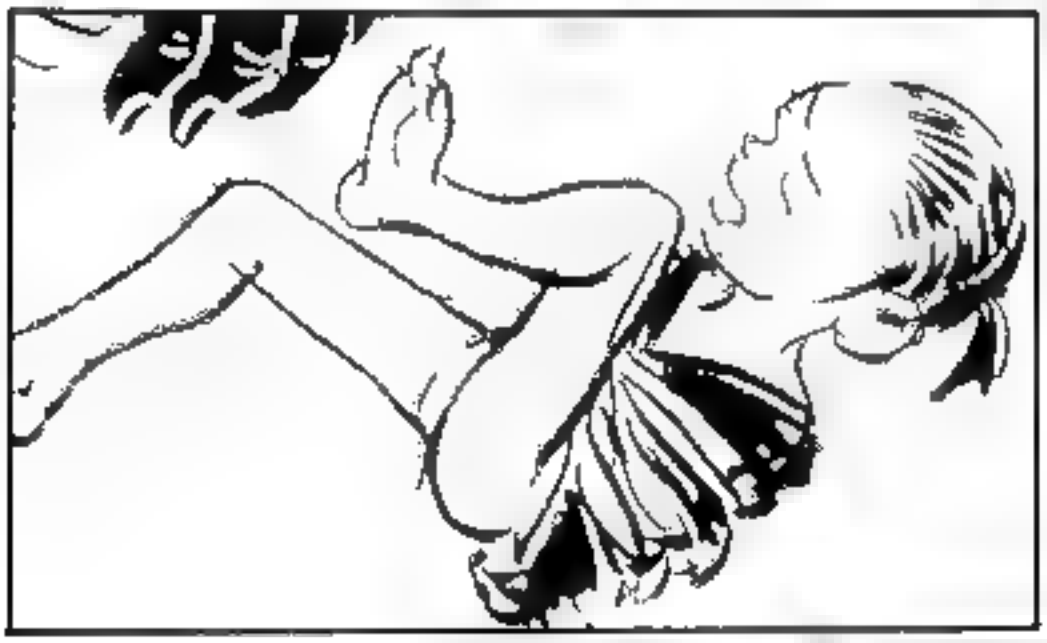
they would choose a thirteen-year-old child from the village, and offer them as a sacrifice to the Kuro-Nyudo.

It says that once every 20 years until the early Edo period...

It doesn't say... though it looks like there was some kind of traditional rite...

Sacrifices to Kuro-Nyudo... What was the method?





...Could it have begun From the Jomon Period...?

47

IF I can just let it loose, I can end the abominable history of this house!
I know what the Kuro-Nyudo is!

ゴゴゴ
MADAM SAKI ...!?

D...
PLEASE,
STOP...!!

AIII EEE EEE EEE EEE EEE EEE ...

MA-DAM SAKI ...!!

PLEASE, STO_

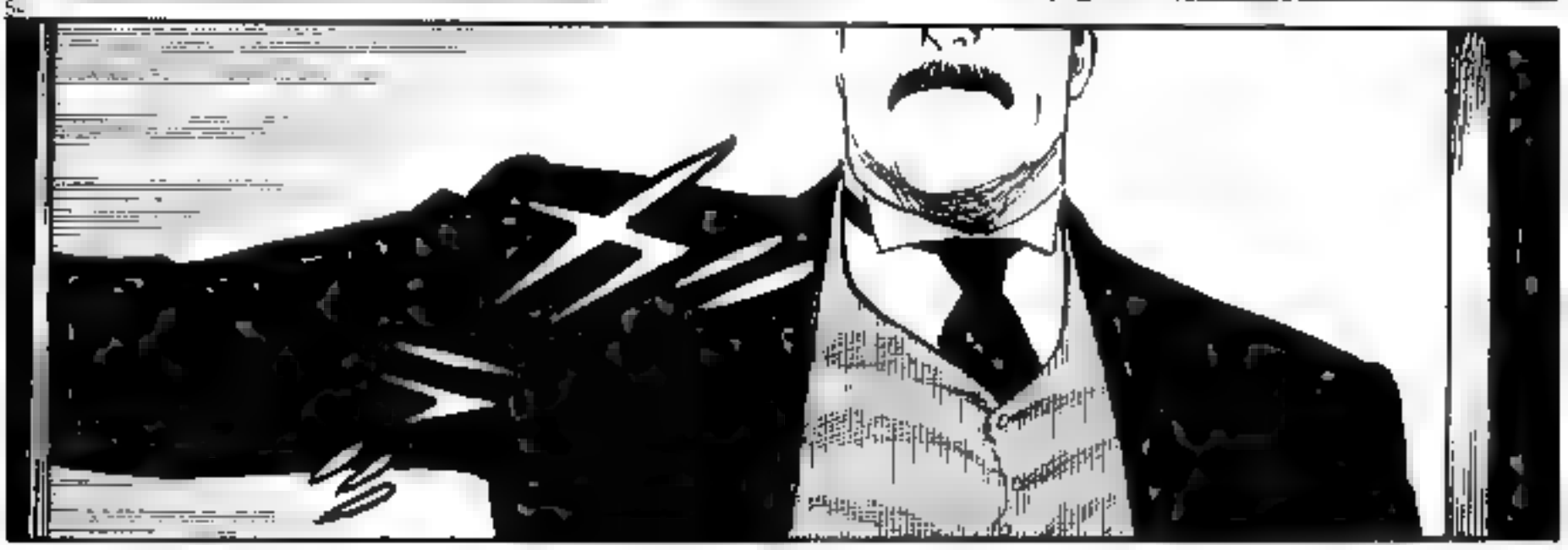
GAAA
AAAA
AAAA
AH!

H" H" H"

Madam Saki...

53

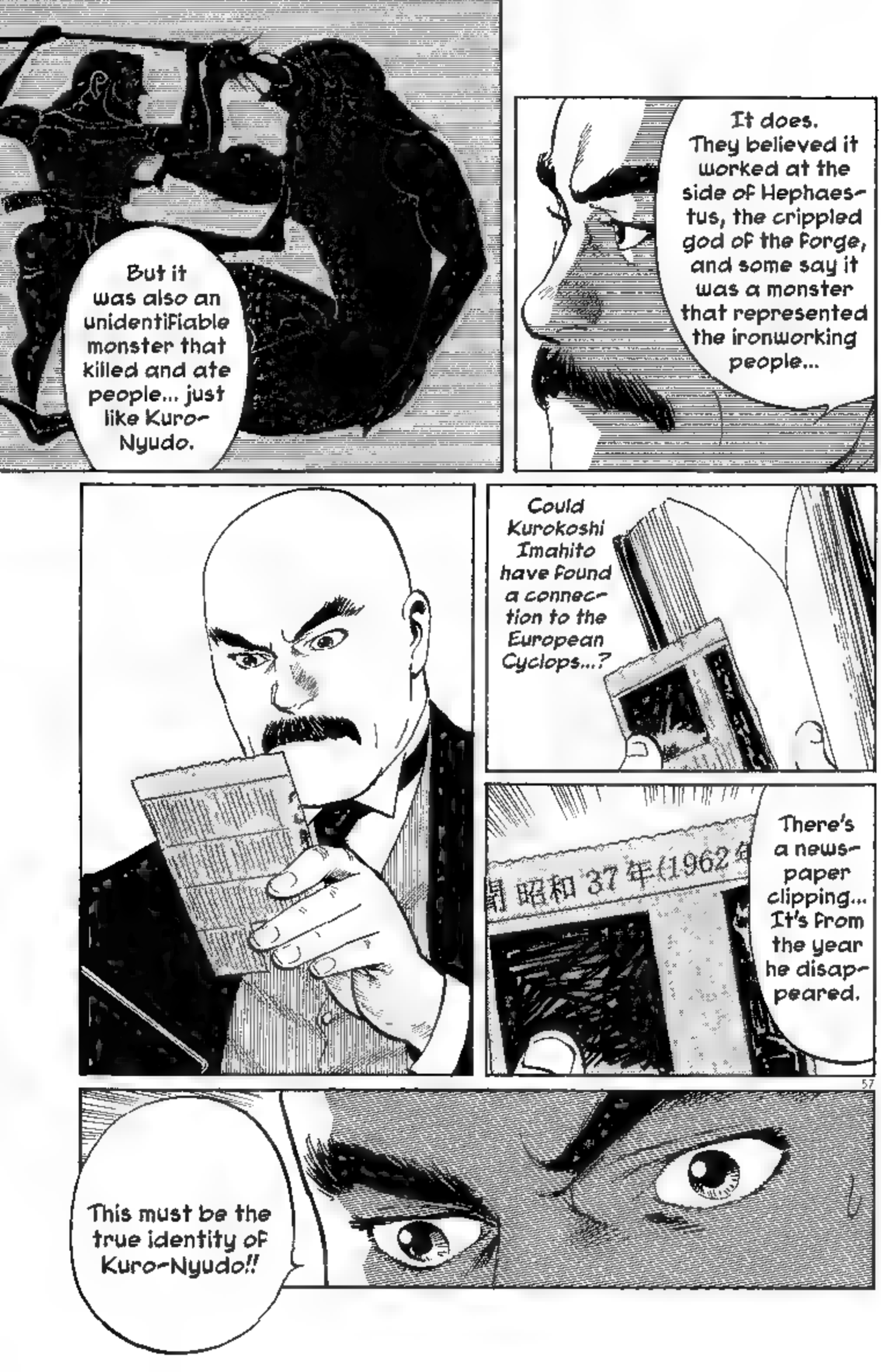
79



Have Imahito's belongings remained as they were...?

Yes... According to Madam Saki's wishes...

It almost looks like the Kuro-Nyudo...

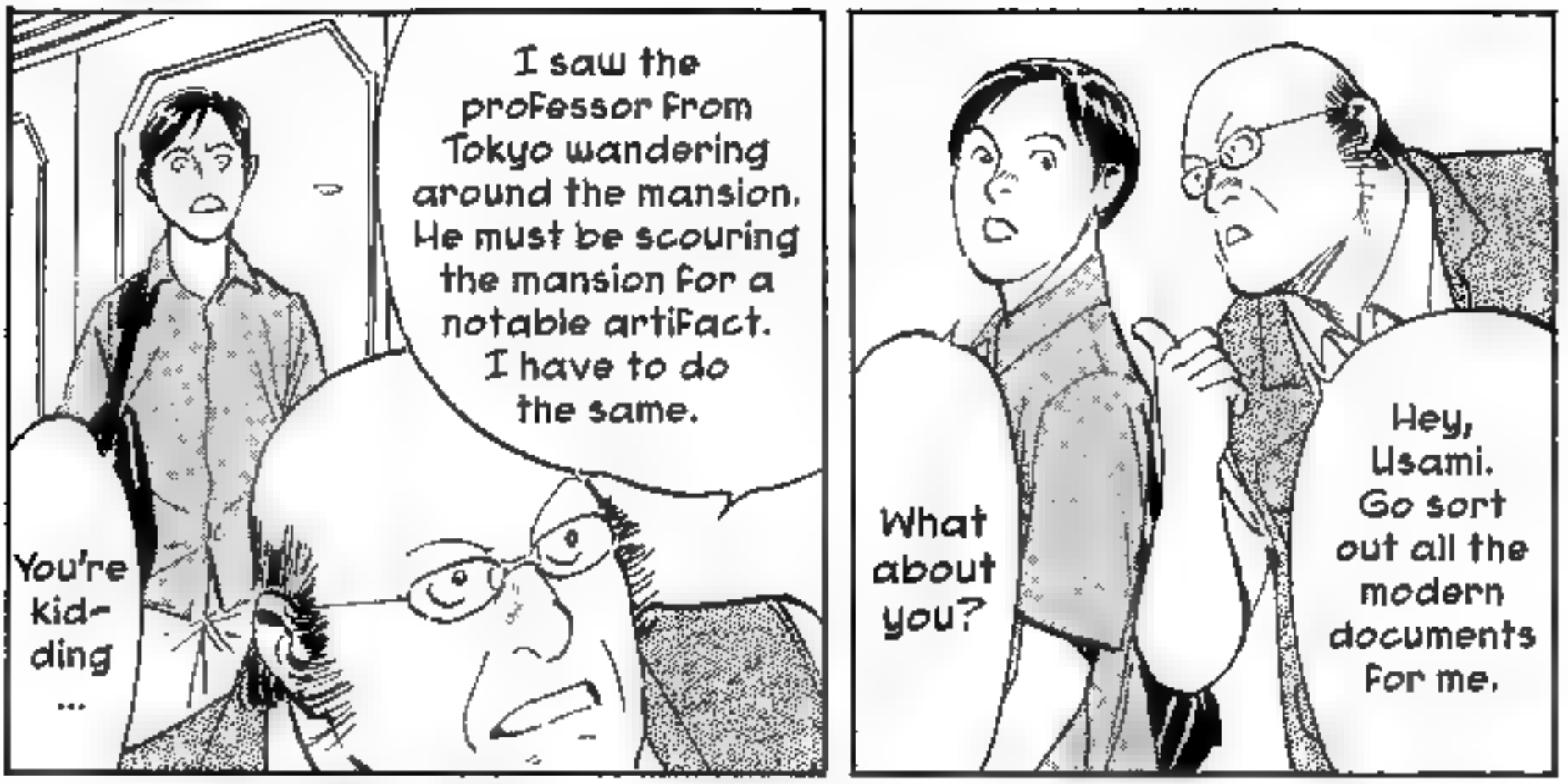

But it was also an unidentifiable monster that killed and ate people... just like Kuro-Nyudo.
It does. They believed it worked at the side of Hephaestus, the crippled god of the forge, and some say it was a monster that represented the ironworking people...
Could Kurokoshi Imahito have found a connection to the European Cyclops...?
There's a newspaper clipping... It's from the year he disappeared.
昭和37年(1962年
This must be the true identity of Kuro-Nyudo!!

So that's what it was...

Thank goodness you got better overnight.

We didn't find anything in the cave, but we wanted to look into the archives...

Go right ahead. I'll join you.


I saw the professor from Tokyo wandering around the mansion. He must be scouring the mansion for a notable artifact. I have to do the same.
You're kidding ...
What about you?
Hey, Usami. Go sort out all the modern documents for me.
.....

That's right. I asked the housekeeper about that scream, and he said it was the sound of gas spouting out of the *kusouzu*...

If not that, it's just the reverberation of the waves in the sea caves. That's how Mr. Tsukioka explained it to me.

The sound of the "spouting basin" !?

I can't believe everyone just accepts that explanation...

Come to think of it, I heard an odd rumor when I was in the hospital.

They said that a number of this house's children have died early from the early Edo period on. Strangely enough, they were never the eldest-born...

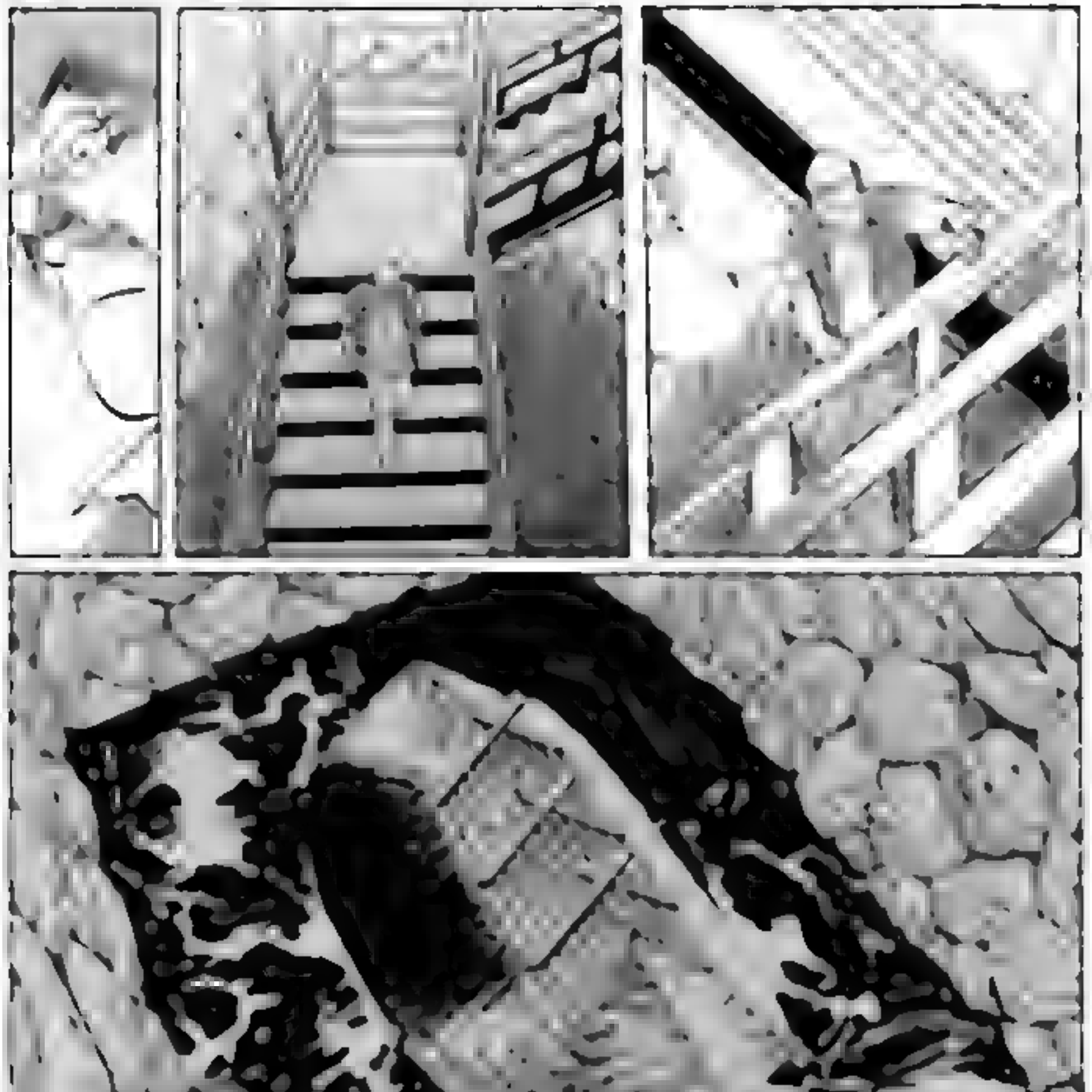
And they were all thirteen years old...

Thir-teen years old...

The curse of the sacri-ficed children ...

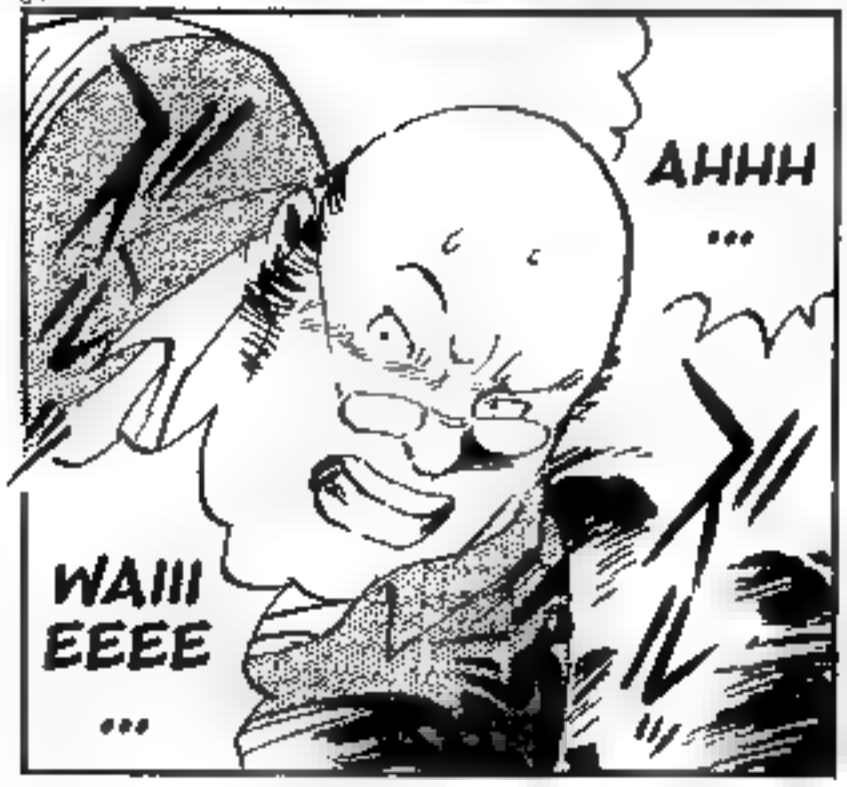
Oh, my! Could it be the curse of the sacrificed children ...?

They all fell into the ocean or went missing, so they left no bodies...



No more! A different smell that's even worse
What's that smell? Is it the petroleum seeping up from underground

They can't have used this dugout to hide people, could they...?


AHHH ...
WAIII EEEE ...

AIIIEE EEE... H... HELP!!



The House of Kurokoshi's petroleum business was going well at first, and more and more oil wells spread throughout the Kurokoshi Village area.

But this did not last long. As the oil wells dried up, they were closed one after another...

It seems they let go of most of the forests in their possession in order to recoup from their massive losses...

And as their family fortunes went in decline, children went missing one by one...

Their last remaining field was taken from them during the land reform, and the House of Kurokoshi continued to decline after the war.

WAA AAA AAA AUG H...

I'm Fine...

Mrs. Saki is not feeling well. I'm afraid that this will...

Tsukioka ...

Even if it is inconvenient to the family...

Yes, that is what I asked you to do.

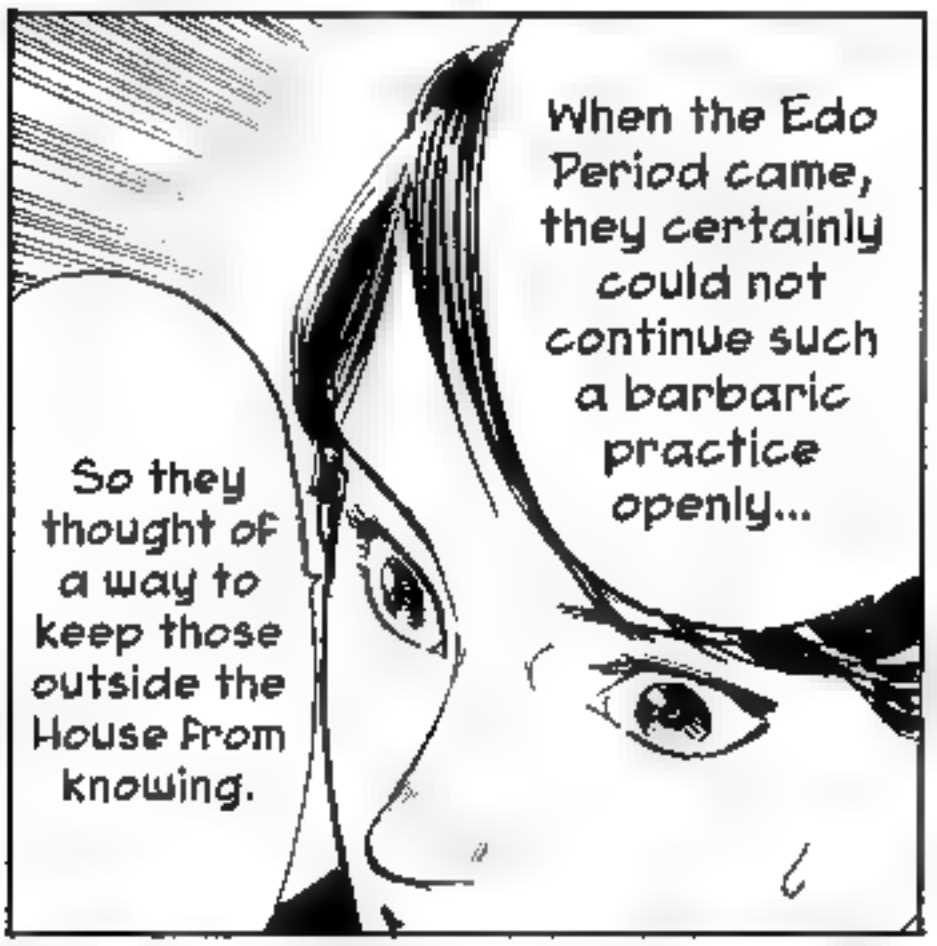
I'm sorry. I just wanted to make my report as soon as possible...

GBBLBLLB BLLBBL...

BLLBBLBL... BBBLLBL...

The House of Kurokoshi has been offering sacrifices to Kuro-Nyudo, most likely beginning in the Jomon Period...




When the Edo Period came, they certainly could not continue such a barbaric practice openly...
So they thought of a way to keep those outside the House from knowing.

How-ever ...
Every time they faced a grave crisis, whether a poor harvest or war, they would choose a thirteen-year-old child from Kurokoshi Village, and offer them as human sacrifices.

They would be raised in the mansion along with the heirs.

Each successive head of the household would keep a young woman from the village as his concubine, and have children through her...

But depending on the circumstances, they would wait for them to turn thirteen, and sacrifice them!

Perhaps this was also protection against their line dying out...

Mrs. Saki... You said you had a half-brother. Would that make you heir and bastard...?

And you were thirteen that year.

I don't want to live in this house anymore, and I don't want to make you live here either, Saki...

P... PLEASE, WAIT, DR. IMIBE ...!

I take it that there was no need to call us here in the first place?

Mr. Tsukioka...

Perhaps you know the truth of Imahito's disappearance...?

Tsukio-
ka...!?

Pro-
fessor?
Pro-
fessor
Nagao
!?

I know you intend to sacrifice Saki to Kuro-Nyudo, Father!

W...WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT GUN, MASTER ...!?

If you want to kill someone, then kill me. Let your precious House of Kurokoshi Fall!

"BARBARIC", MY ASS! THIS IS HOW THE HOUSE OF KUROKOSHI HAS LIVED THROUGH THE AGES!!

GNN NNNG GHH...

It's alright, Tsukioka.

M... MASTER IMAHITO, YOU SHOULDN'T PROVOKE YOUR FATHER...

It's all because of the trivial object that's sunk to the bottom of the kusouzu.

I'll tell you the truth of how meaningless this practice that dates back to the Jomon Period is.

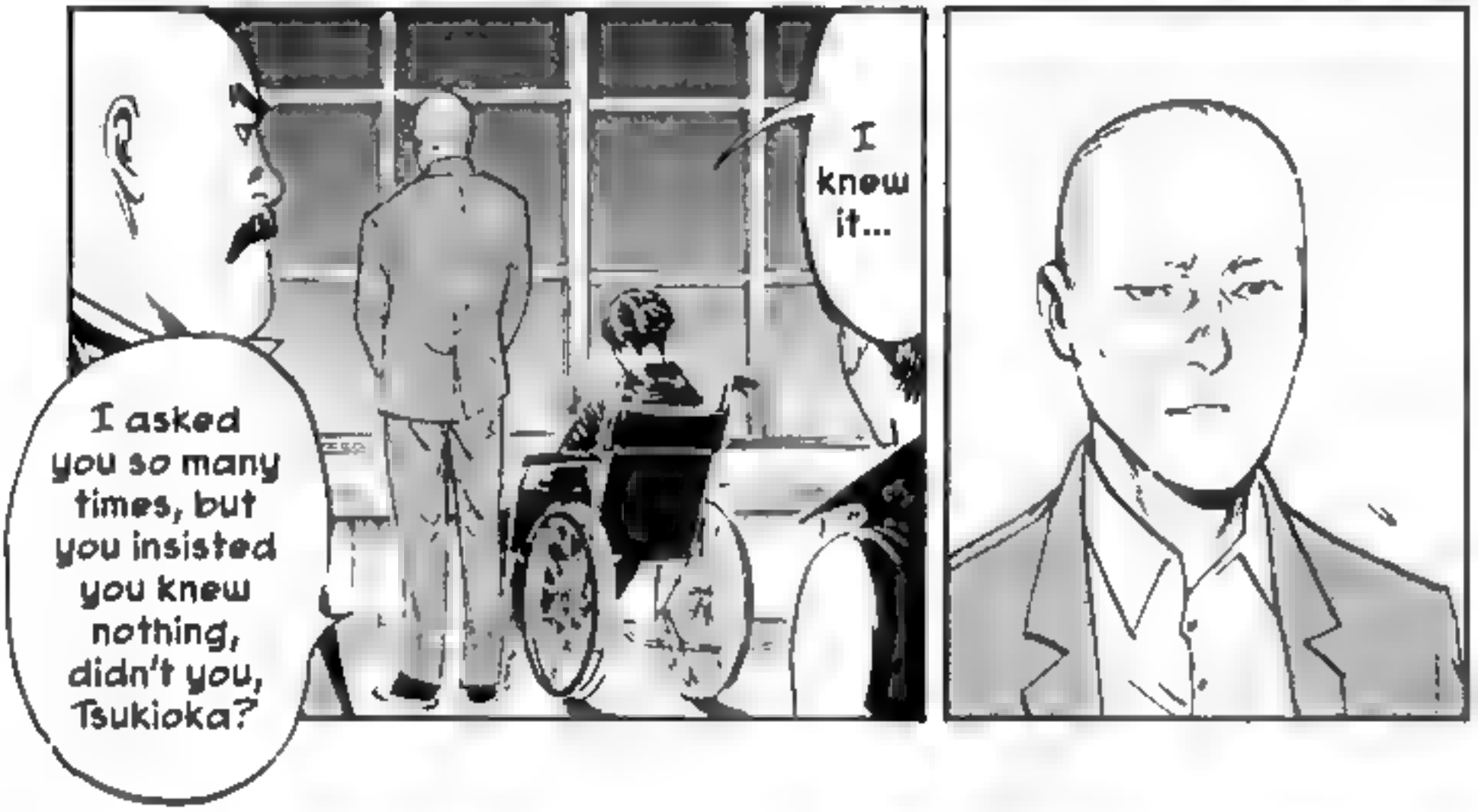
The Kuro-Nyudo is...

M... MASTER IMAHITO ...!?

Stay back! You'll sink, too ...!!

Please protect her...

T...Take care of Saki, Tsukioka ...


I asked you so many times, but you insisted you knew nothing, didn't you, Tsukioka?
I knew it...

Ever since that day, the Master's behavior grew stranger...

He ordered me to hide Imahito's death from the public eye, and I had no choice but to obey him.

From time to time, the head of this household is born with a strong and eccentric personality. Kurokoshi Juzo... The Master was one such head...

Let her have my children! She can produce an heir and a sacrificial child!

Saki's 24 years old now. She's an adult...

R...
Run...
USA-
MI
...!?
F...
Father
.....!!

B...But isn't he dead!? And even if he was alive, wouldn't he be ninety years old ...!?

IMIBE!

G... GOT IT!

TAKE CARE OF MA-DAM SAKI!

GG GH ...

...DE-TRO-LEUM !?

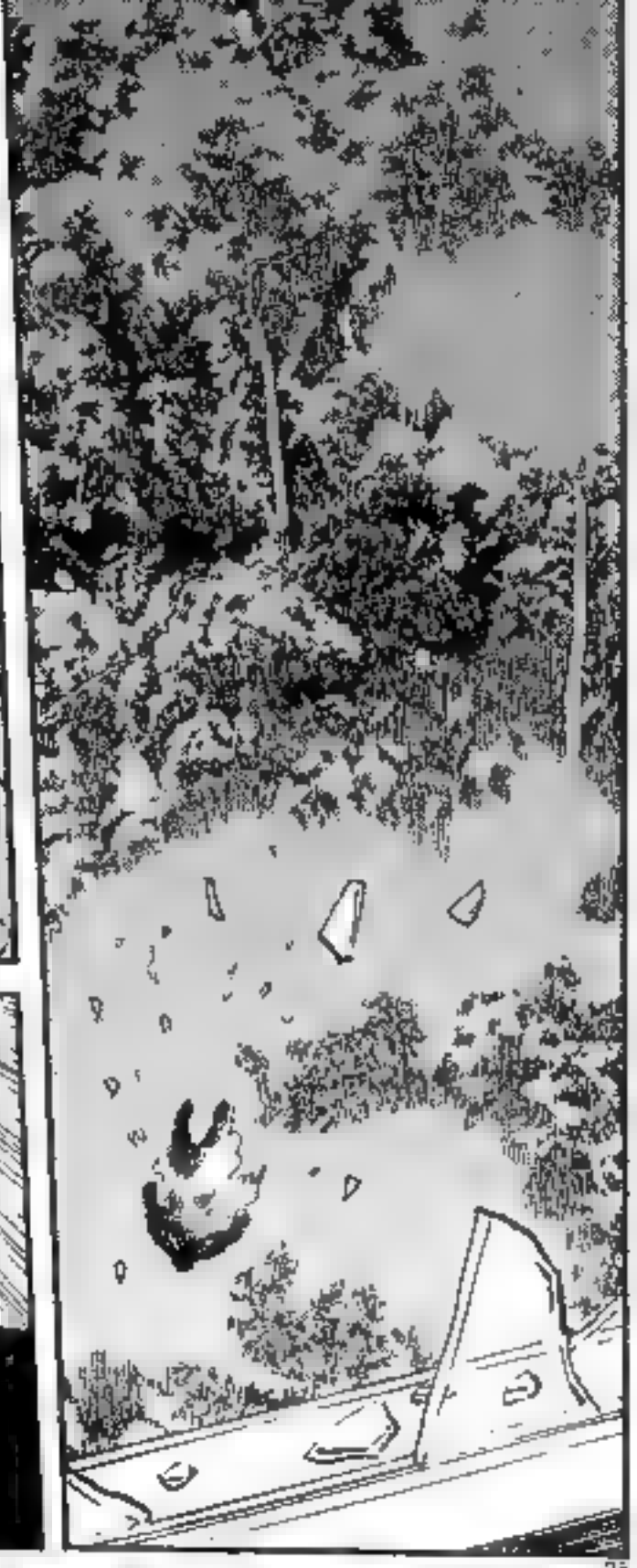
AHH HH...

82

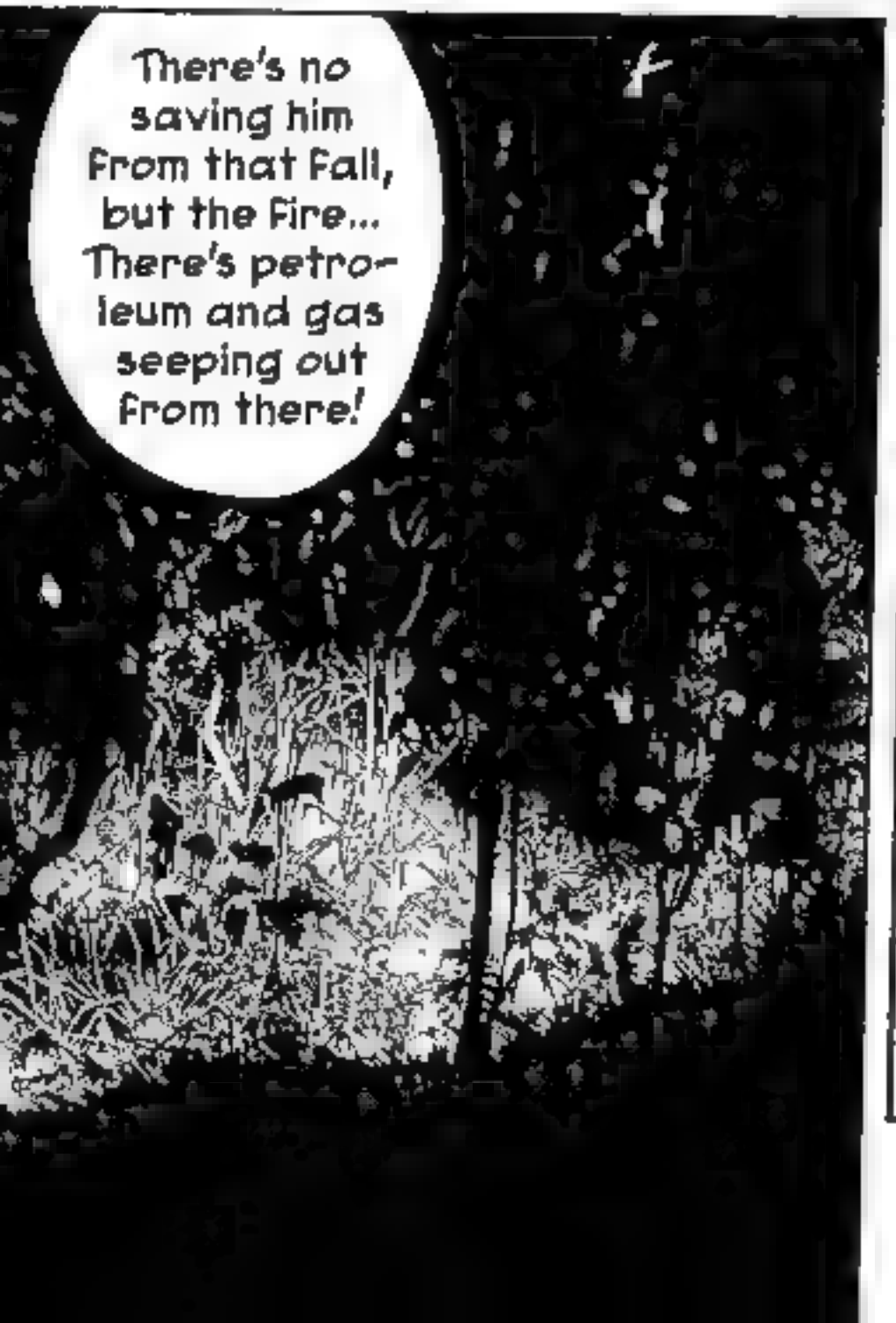
SA... KI...

I...IS THIS THE GUN YOU USED TO SHOOT MY BROTHER!?

GYAAA AAAAA AHHHH HHHHH HHH!



U... Usami didn't make it ...


There's no saving him from that fall, but the fire... There's petroleum and gas seeping out from there!

And Tsukioka might have a broken spine... They did call an ambulance, though.
Good.

IT LOOKS LIKE THE HEAT IS SOFTENING THE ASPHALT LAYER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE KUROUSU! THE GAS IS RISING MORE ACTIVELY, CATCHING FIRE, AND HEATING IT EVEN FURTHER!

W... WE CAN'T MOVE TSUKIOKA, SO SHE'S STAYING WITH HIM!

DID MRS. SAKI LEAVE WITH YOU!?

THE MANSION WILL CATCH ON FIRE AT THIS RATE... HUH!?

What's that!?

The gas must be pushing up the bodies that were buried in the solid asphalt...

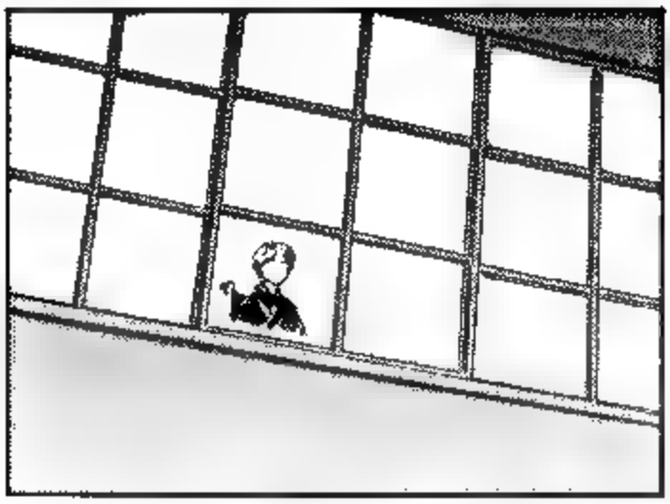
Are those ...?

It's a prehistoric elephant that migrated from the continent to the Japanese Archipelago before the Jomon Period.

Naumann's Elephant ...!?

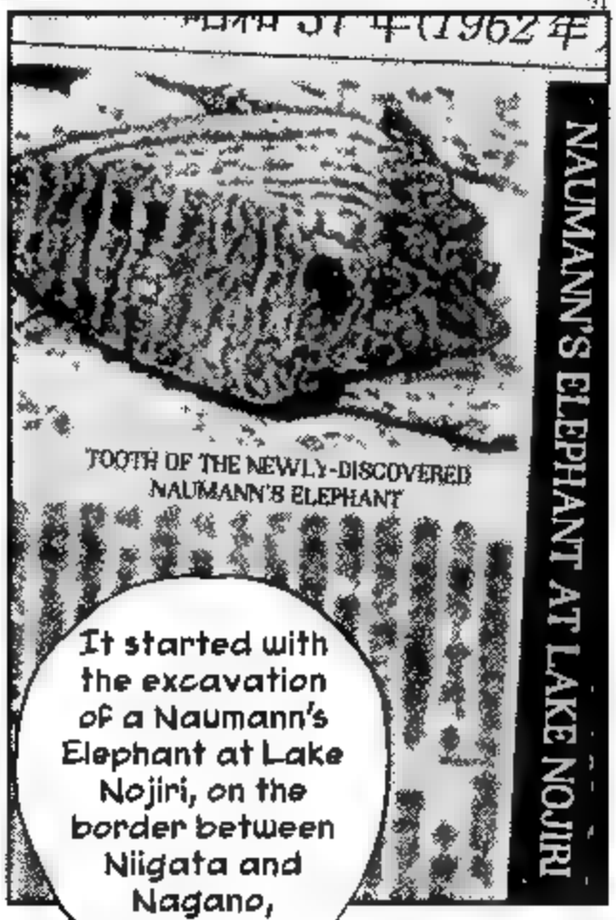
There are places where petroleum exudes from the ground called "tar pits", where animals that have their legs caught in the soft asphalt layer end up sinking deeper inside.

Niigata was along their migratory routes. In addition...



Kurokoshi Imahito must have caught on to that possibility.

As the elephant's skull has a conspicuously large nostril, some have seen it as the skull of a one-eyed giant.
There's a theory that this was the inspiration for the Greek Cyclops.


昭和37年(1962年
NAUMANN'S ELEPHANT AT LAKE NOJIRI
TOOTH OF THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED NAUMANN'S ELEPHANT
It started with the excavation of a Naumann's Elephant at Lake Nojiri, on the border between Niigata and Nagano, in 1962.

The patron deity of the petroleum that gave them profits from trade...

The Jomon people may have had the same idea...

It's thought that they were sacrifices of some sort.

The tar pits in America often have human bones mixed in among the various animal bones.

DAMN ...!!

OH, NO ...!!

Madam Saki, if you hadn't tried to find the truth, I would have taken it to the grave...

My brother died to keep me from being sacrificed...

And after that, you have protected me.

But I have seen it all. I have seen everything I needed to see before my coming death...

Madam Saki...

I have been so blessed ...

94

I...IT'S TOO LATE! WE CAN'T GET TO THEM!!

MRS. SAKI! MRS. SAKI!!

A history that went back to the Jomon Period... or even earlier, vanished without a trace

The House of Kurokoshi burned for a whole day and night, spewing black smoke into the air

# THE CASE FOR MUNAKATA PROFESSOR

## CHAPTER 24

PRESENTED BY

HOKUTO NO GUN

TRANSLATED BY

SYSTEMATICCHAOS

EDITING BY

HIGHTIDE AND KAZUHIKO

PROOFREADING BY

DESTORYERRING

# CHAPTER 25:

# THE LOST ISLAND

Long, long ago... Back when Oita Prefecture was known as the Province of Bungo, there was an island in Beppu Bay called "Uryu Island"

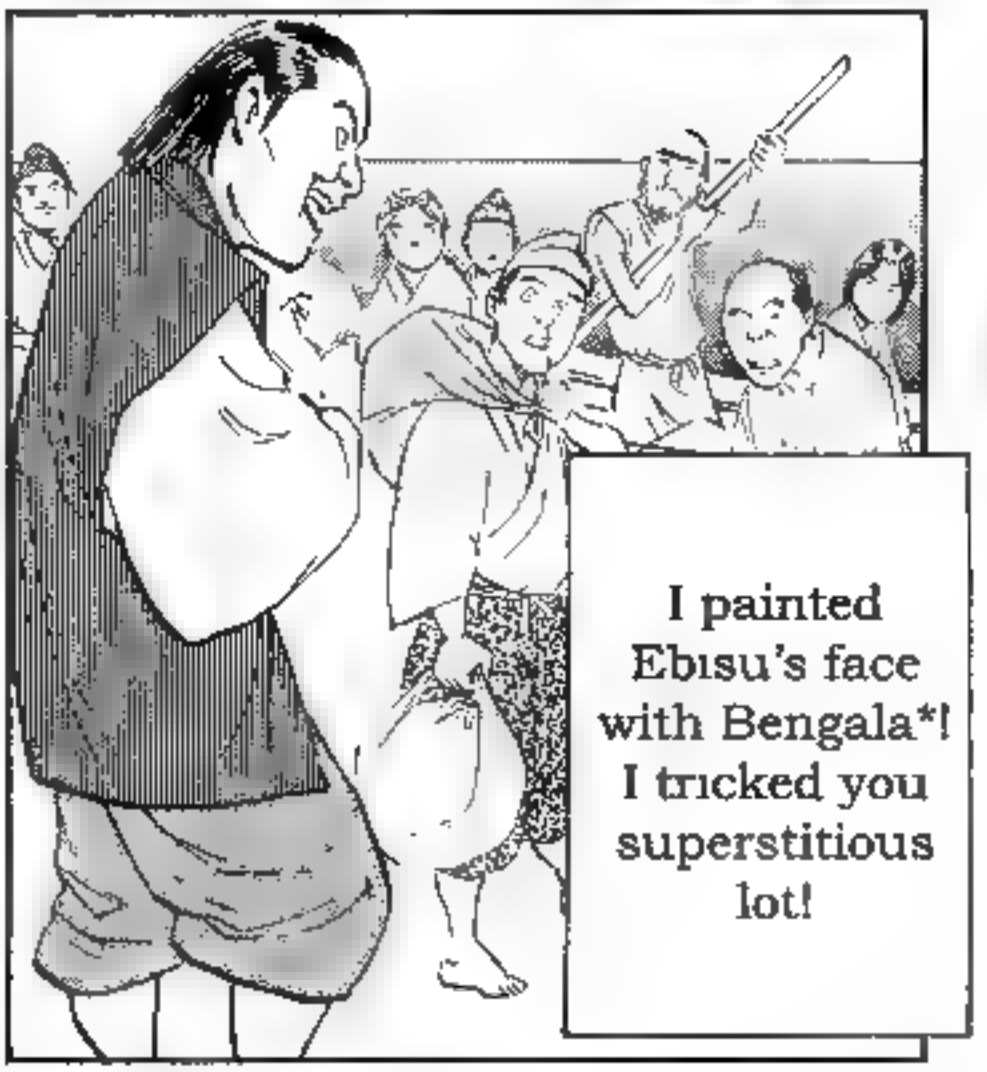
But there was a saying passed down in the shrine to Ebisu.

On this island there lived about a thousand devout people in a town called "Okino-hama", and a number of fishing villages.

But one day, in July of Keicho year 7...

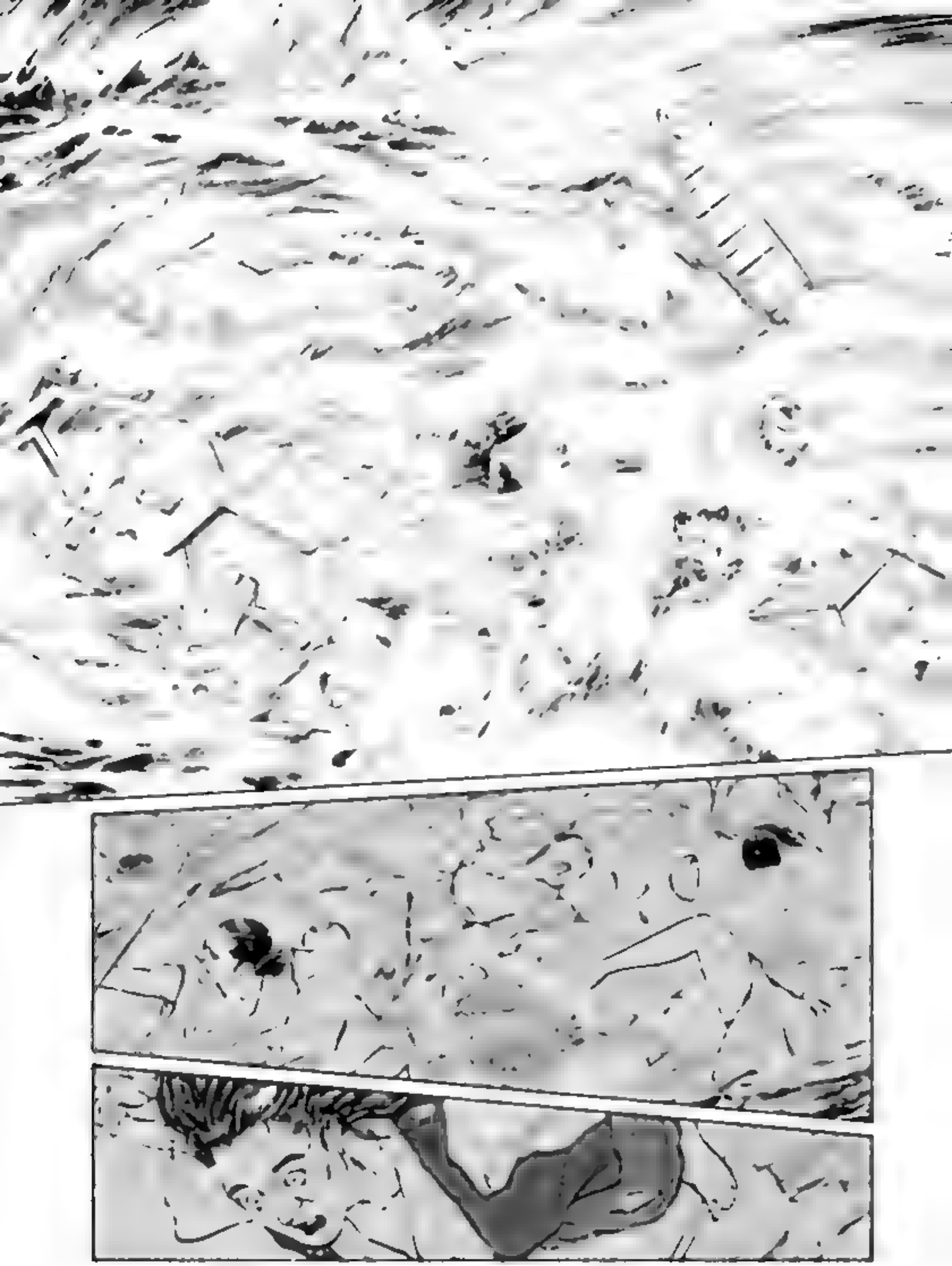
If the people ever forgot their faith, the statue's face would turn red, and Uryu Island would sink into the sea

The island was in an uproar. Ebisu's face was bright red! The island was sinking!



*A red pigment with a yellowish tinge. Rouge.

At that moment, the waves receded far into the bay...



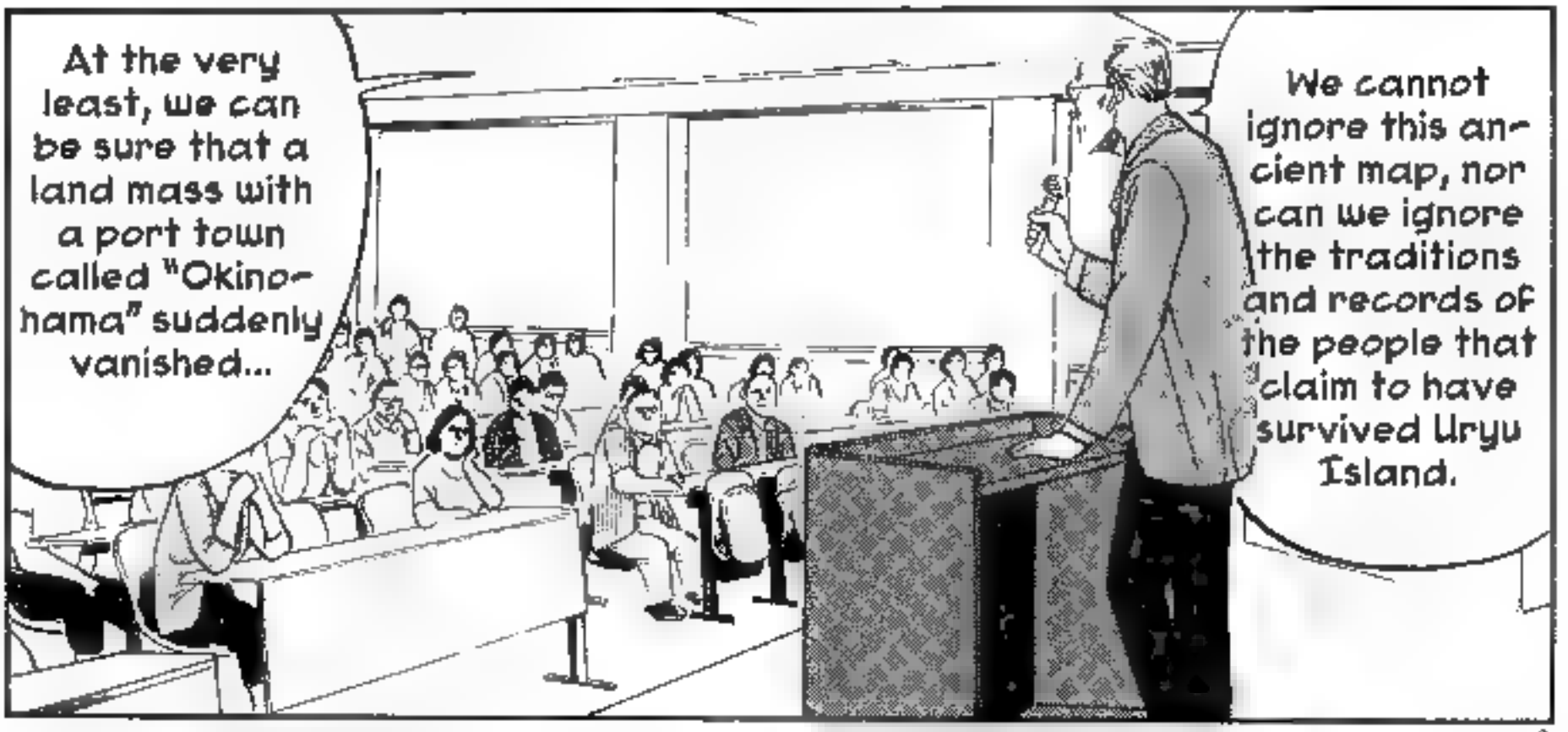
There were only a few survivors. Uryu Island had sunk, and in its place was nothing but sea...

Kyoudou - Dojo City
Dojo Prefecture

But I think it is possible a real island that sank in the 16th Century.

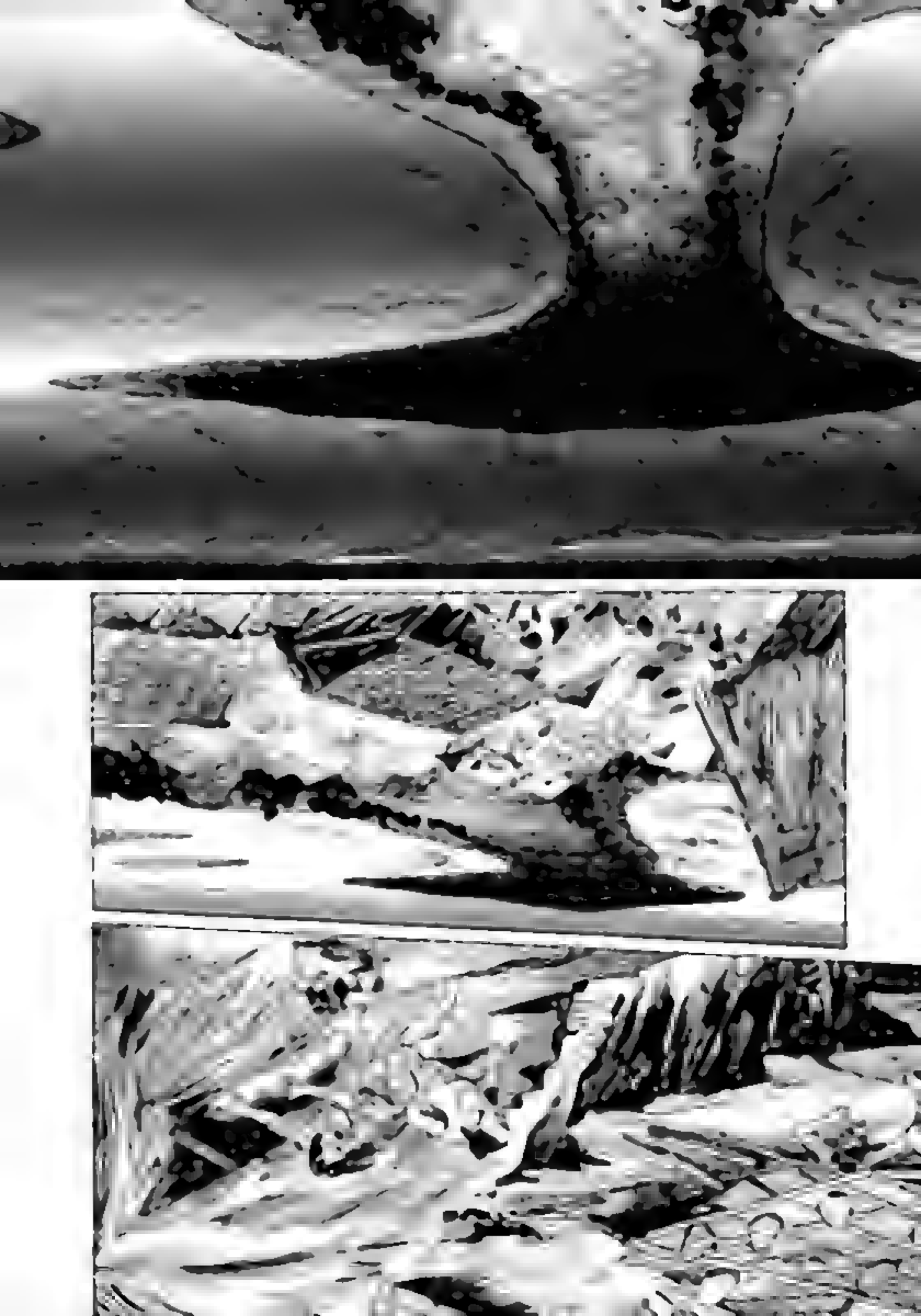
...It was once said that the legend of Uryu [illegible] basis in Fact.

Hisamitsu Island
Uryu Island


At the very least, we can be sure that a land mass with a port town called "Okinohama" suddenly vanished...
We cannot ignore this ancient map, nor can we ignore the traditions and records of the people that claim to have survived Uryu Island.

And as a matter of fact, the Oita region was struck by an earthquake and tsunami during the "Great Keicho Earthquake" in Keicho year 1.

July 12th,
Keicho year 1 (1596)

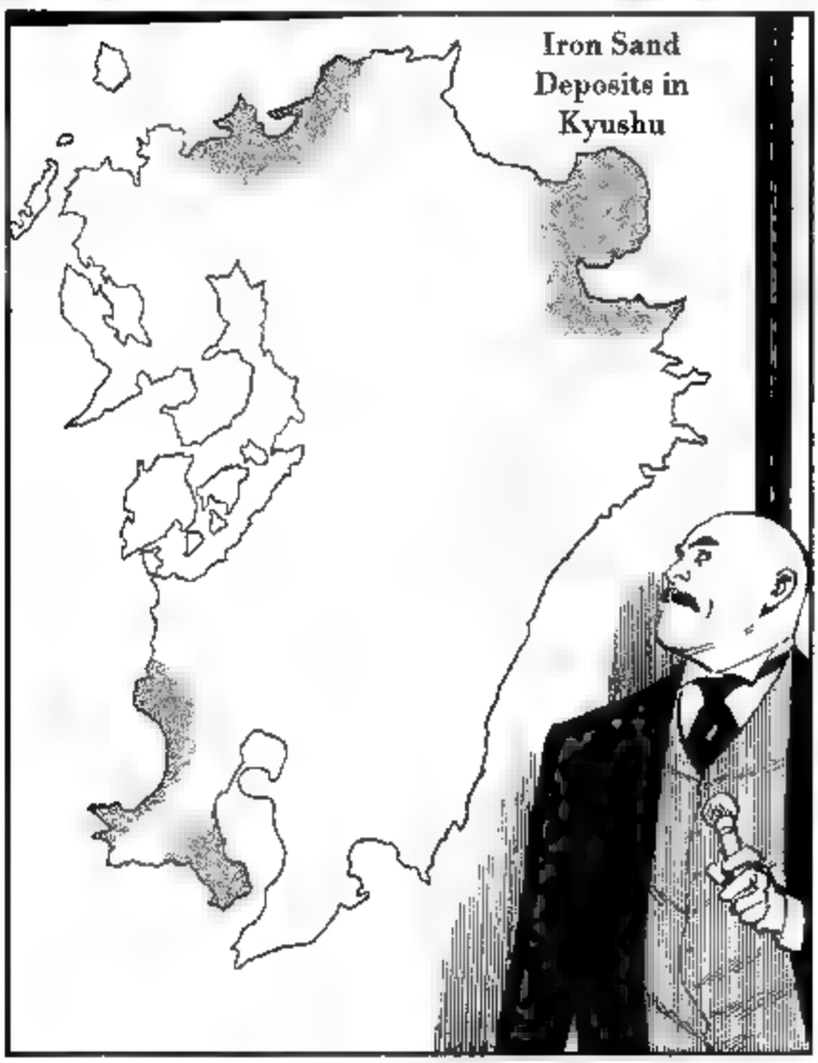


The sudden earthquake and tsunami wiped out a large village called "Okinohama", along with the ships moored there... That is what Luis Frois, a missionary with ties to Bungo, reported to Rome.

There were many foreign ships that [illegible] and even Francis Xavier once lodged there.

SYMPOSIUM:
UNRAVELLING
THE MYSTERY
OF URYU
ISLAND
That was Professor Kano, professor of history at Funai University.
Next, we'd like to welcome Professor Munakata Tadakusu, professor of Folkloristics at East Asia university of Culture, who's here from Tokyo.

ﾊﾞﾝ
ﾊﾞﾝ
ﾊﾞﾝ


Iron Sand Deposits in Kyushu

...So while I may be somewhat of an outsider, I'd like to speak to you as a former native of Kyushu.

Now let's say that Uryu Island did exist in Beppu Bay...

The Kunisaki Peninsula and the coast of Beppu Bay had iron sand deposits that rivalled Fukuoka and Kagoshima.

Oita City

Beppu Bay

It would have been near the old mouth of the Oita River and composed of its sediments.

Present Coastline

Uryu Island?

Oita Bay

Old Coastline

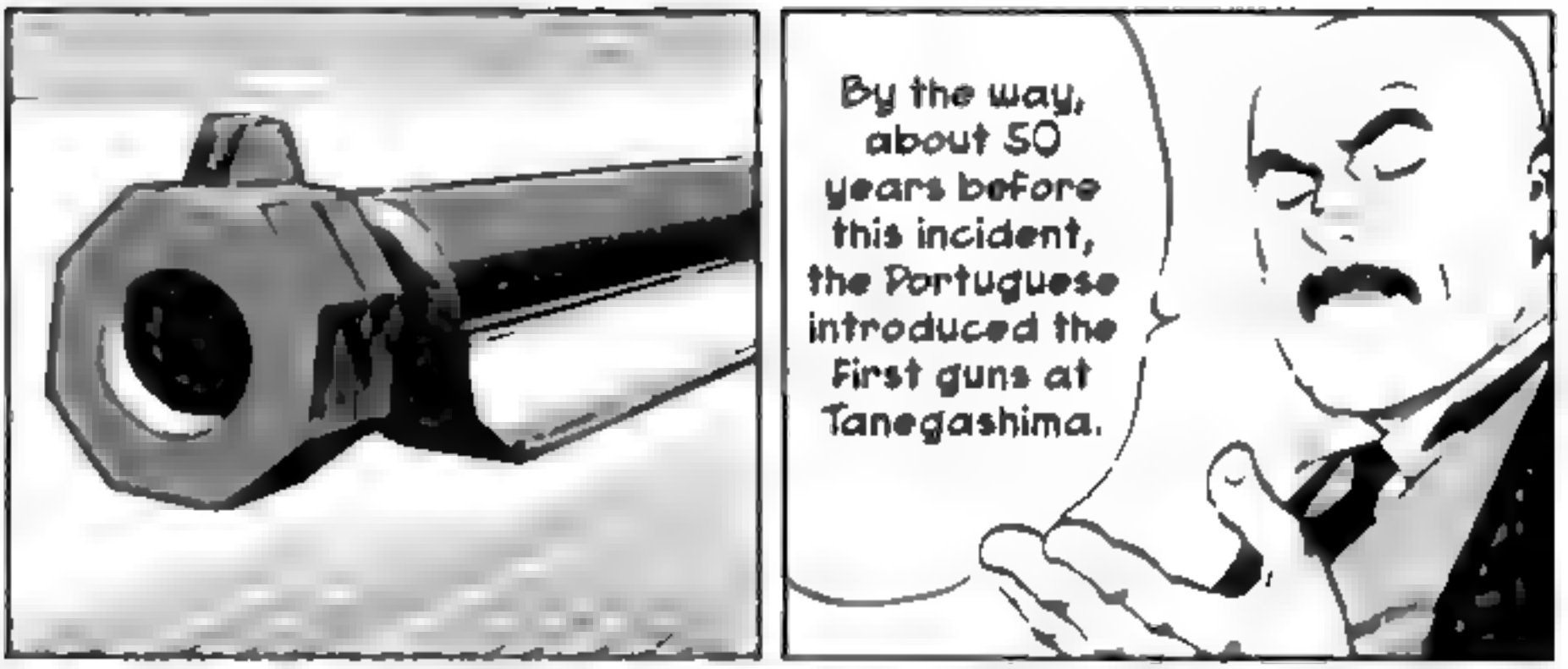
Oita River

Its hypothetical location would have been north of the present-day Beppu Bay, approximately one kilometer from the old coastline.

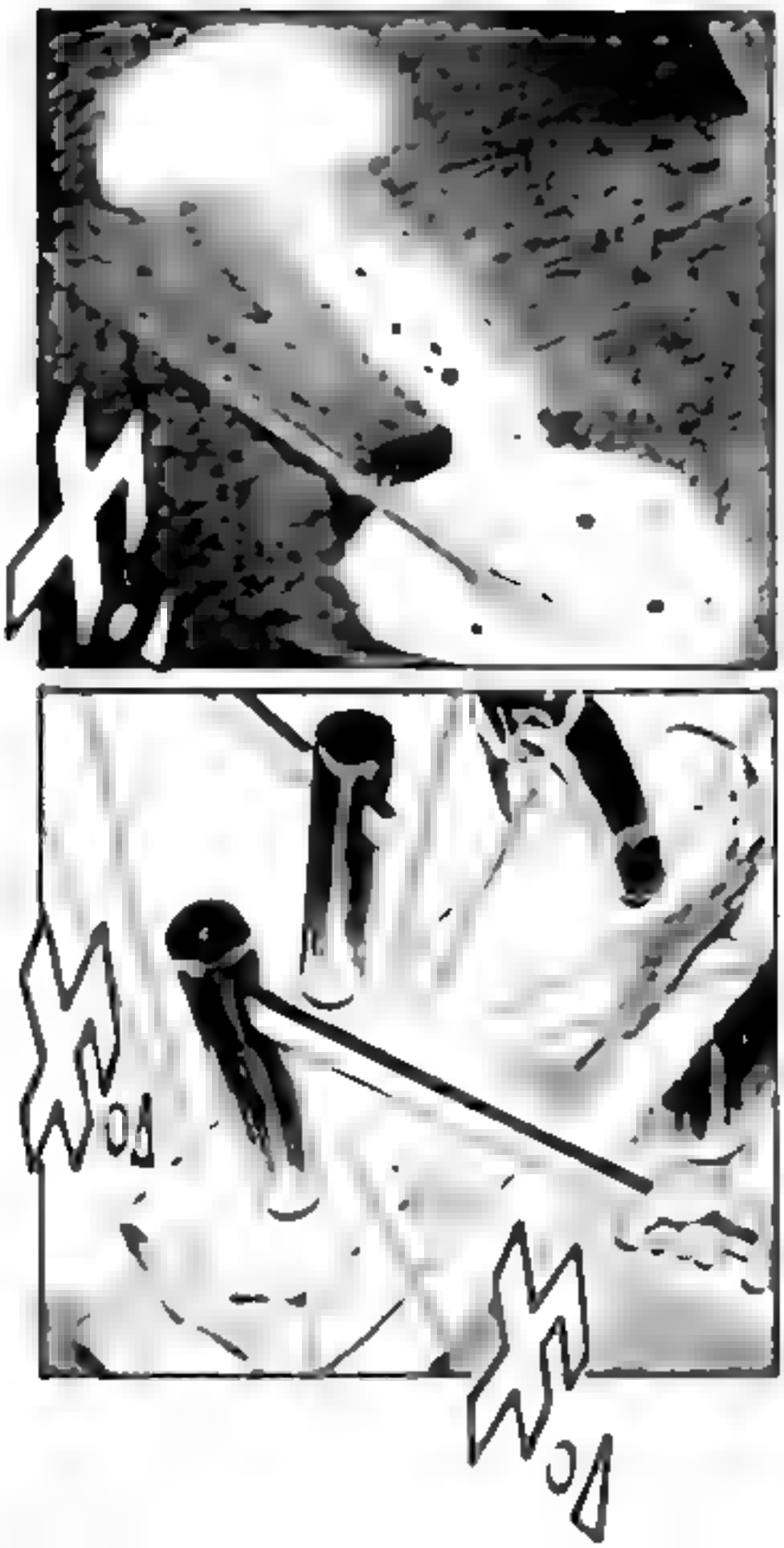


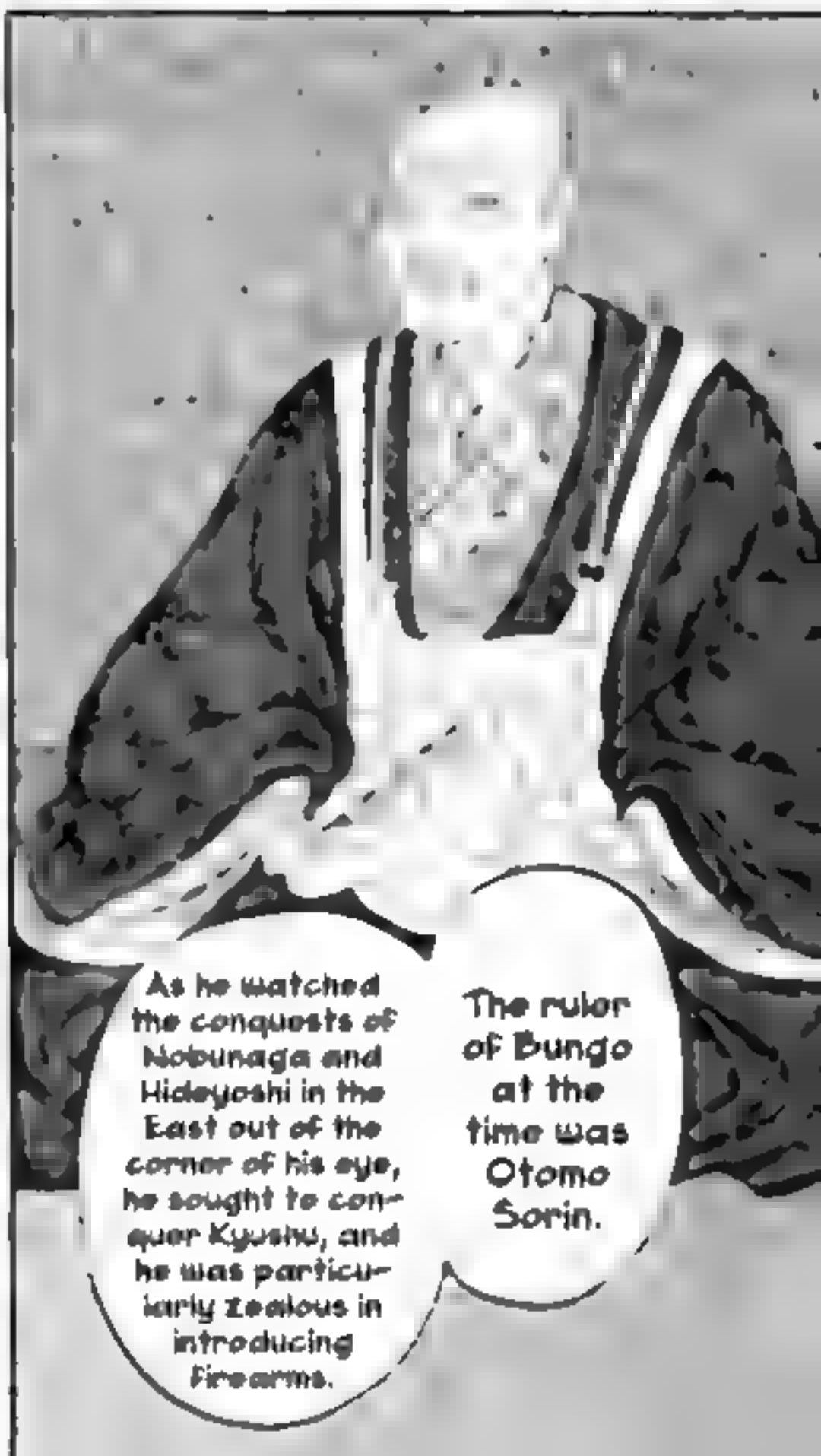
You would guess that you could find much iron sand there.

This means the whole island would have been sand, connected to the mainland with a sand bank.


By the way, about 50 years before this incident, the Portuguese introduced the first guns at Tanegashima.
The Japanese were entranced by these new weapons, and set about making domestically-produced guns
As it was rich in iron sand, Tanegashima was a leader in gun manufacturing.
And the area of Kyushu that was most fervent to introduce this technology was Bungo!

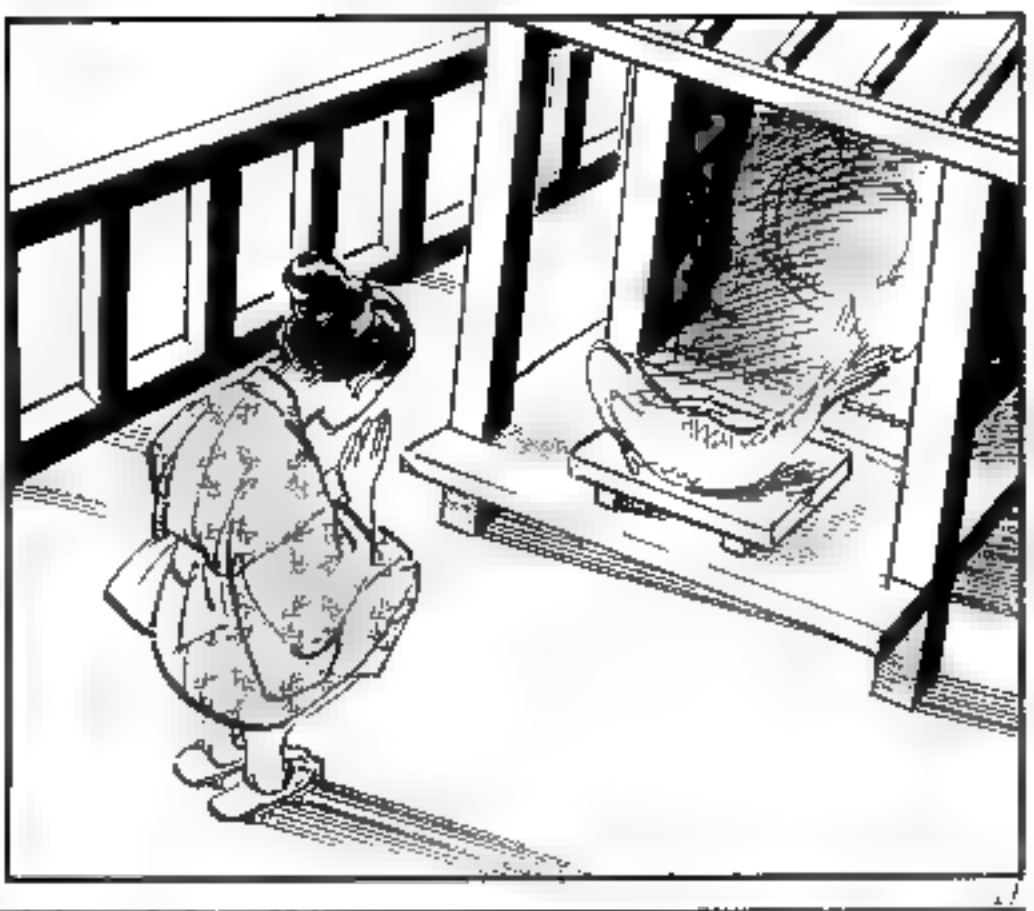
This means that a band of ironworkers and gunsmiths may have settled in a corner of Iriyu Island

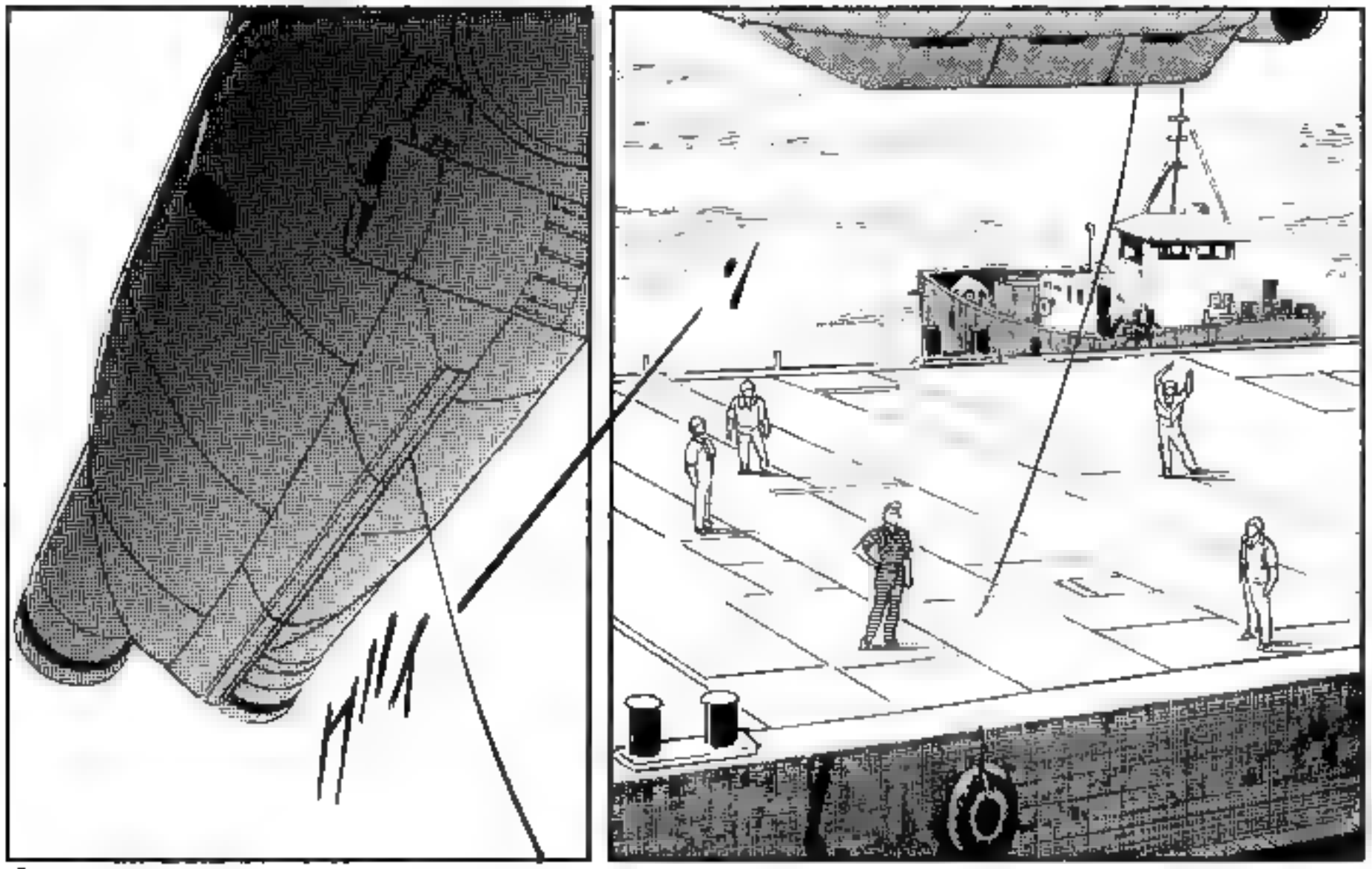


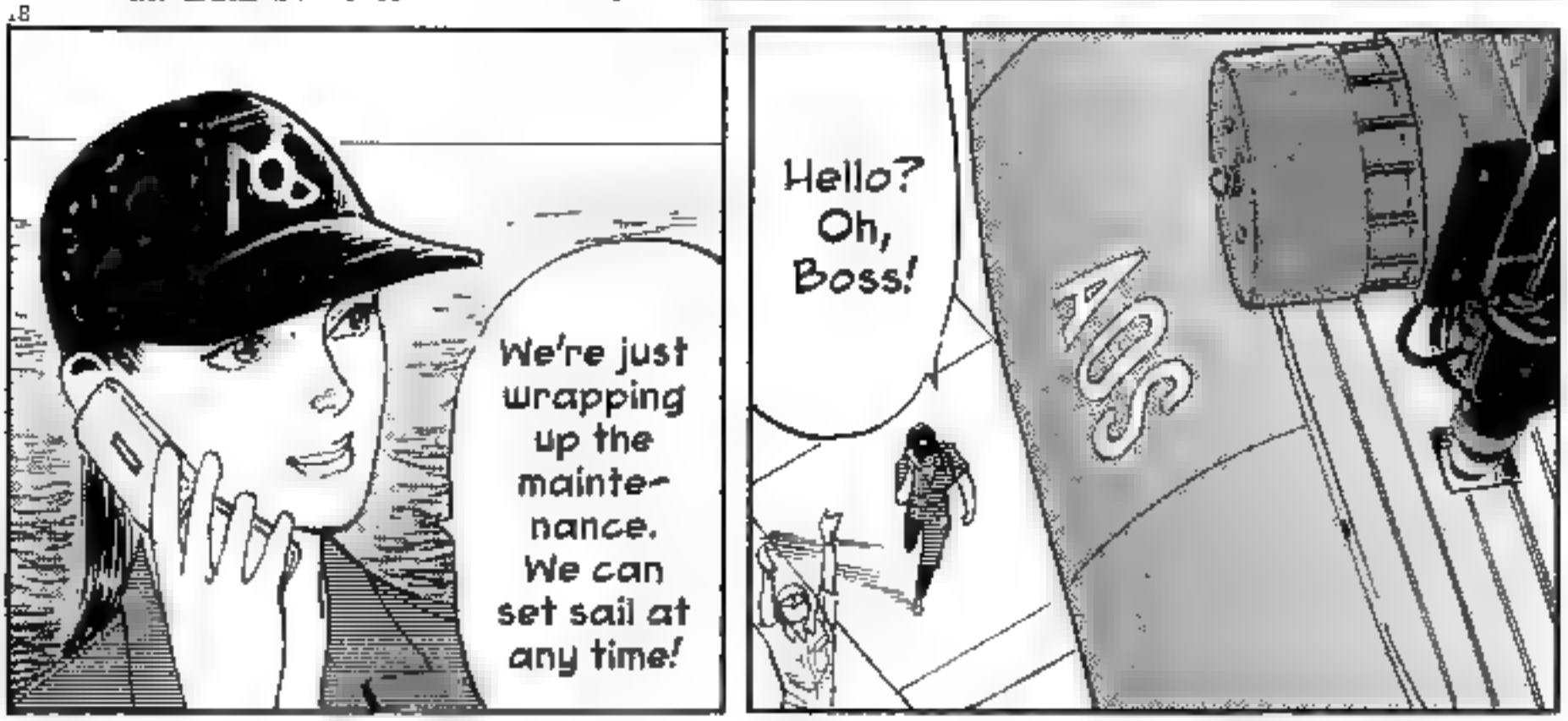


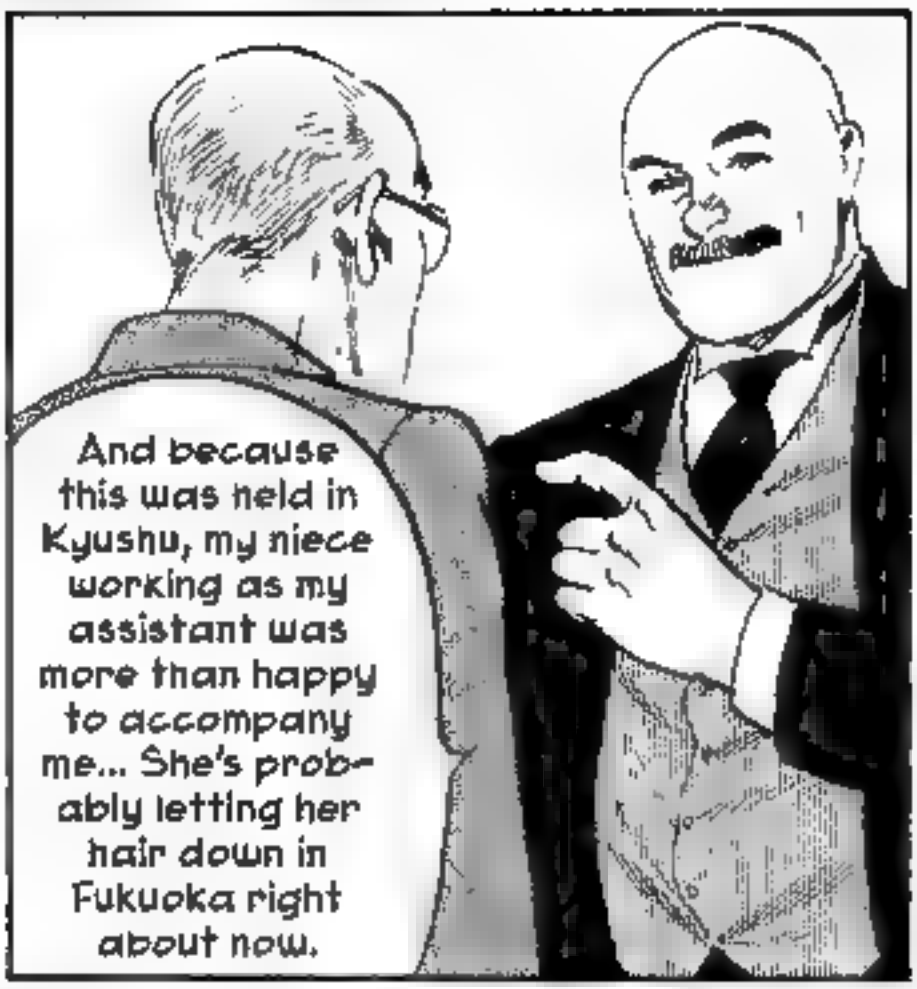
As he watched the conquests of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi in the East out of the corner of his eye, he sought to conquer Kyushu, and he was particularly zealous in introducing firearms.

The ruler of Bungo at the time was Otomo Sorin.

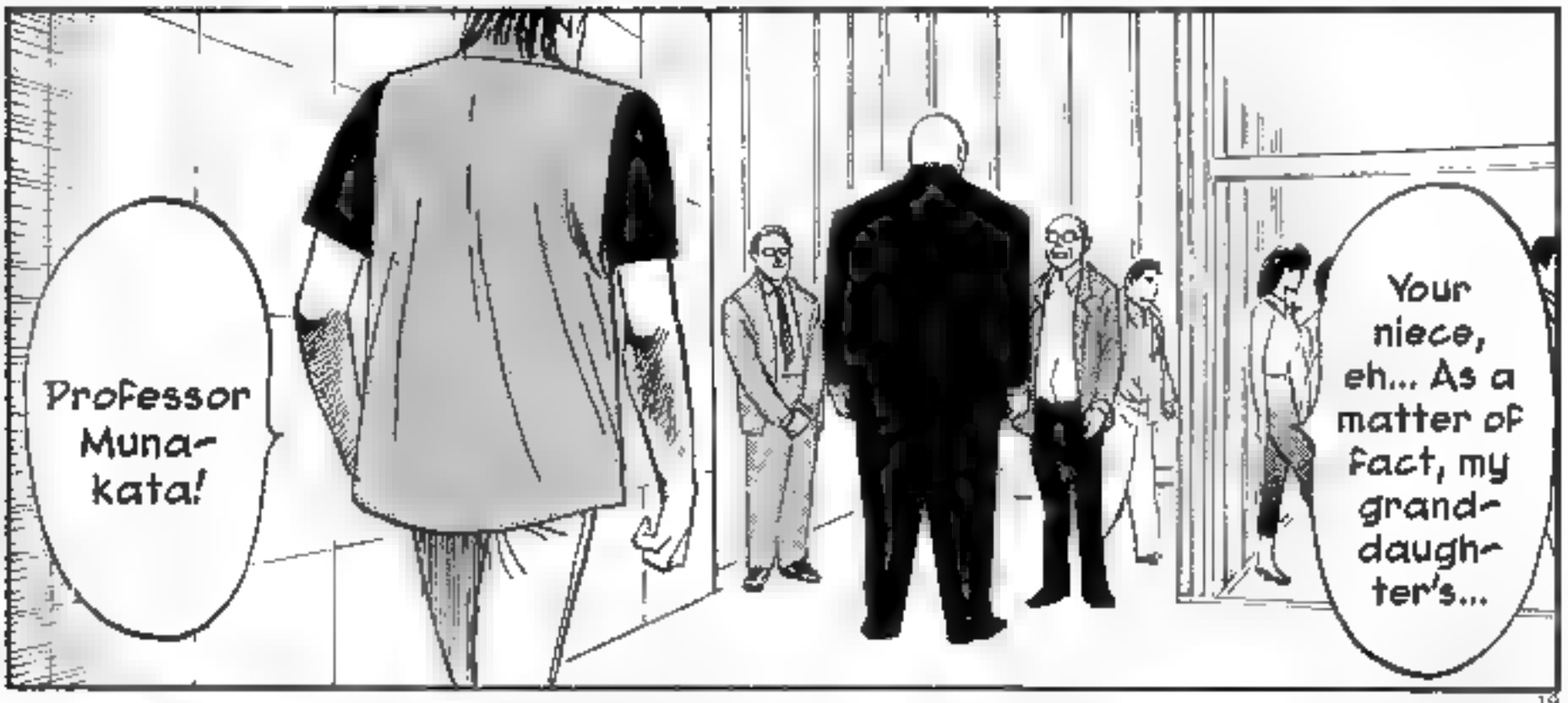





We're just wrapping up the maintenance. We can set sail at any time!
Hello? Oh, Boss!


And because this was held in Kyushu, my niece working as my assistant was more than happy to accompany me... She's probably letting her hair down in Fukuoka right about now.

No, it was my pleasure. I learned much from you, Professor Kano.
Thank you for coming all this way for this symposium, Professor Munakata.

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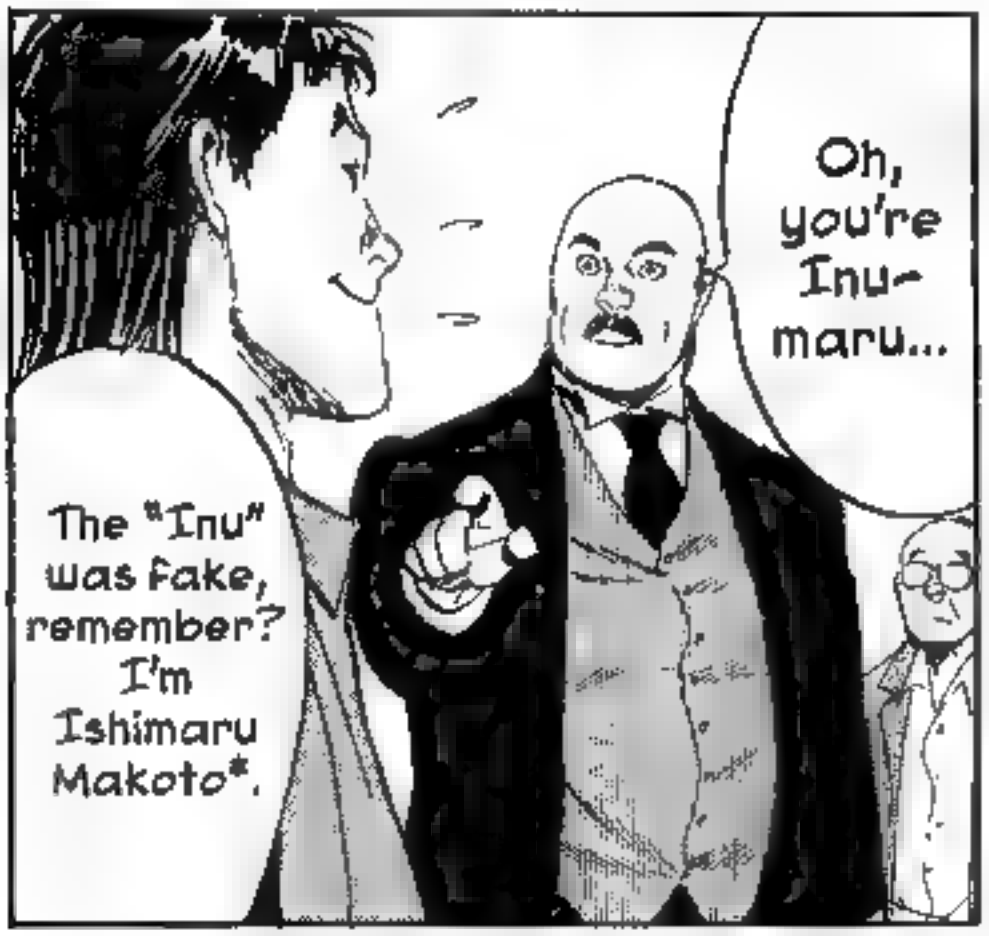


19

*SEE THE SPECIAL VOLUME "THE CASE RECORDS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA, COLLECTION 7", CHAPTER 22, "THE IRON SAND HAKKENDEN"

Are you interested in Uryu Island at all...?

I told you, it's Ishi-maru!

I see... Oh, my apologies, Professor Kano.

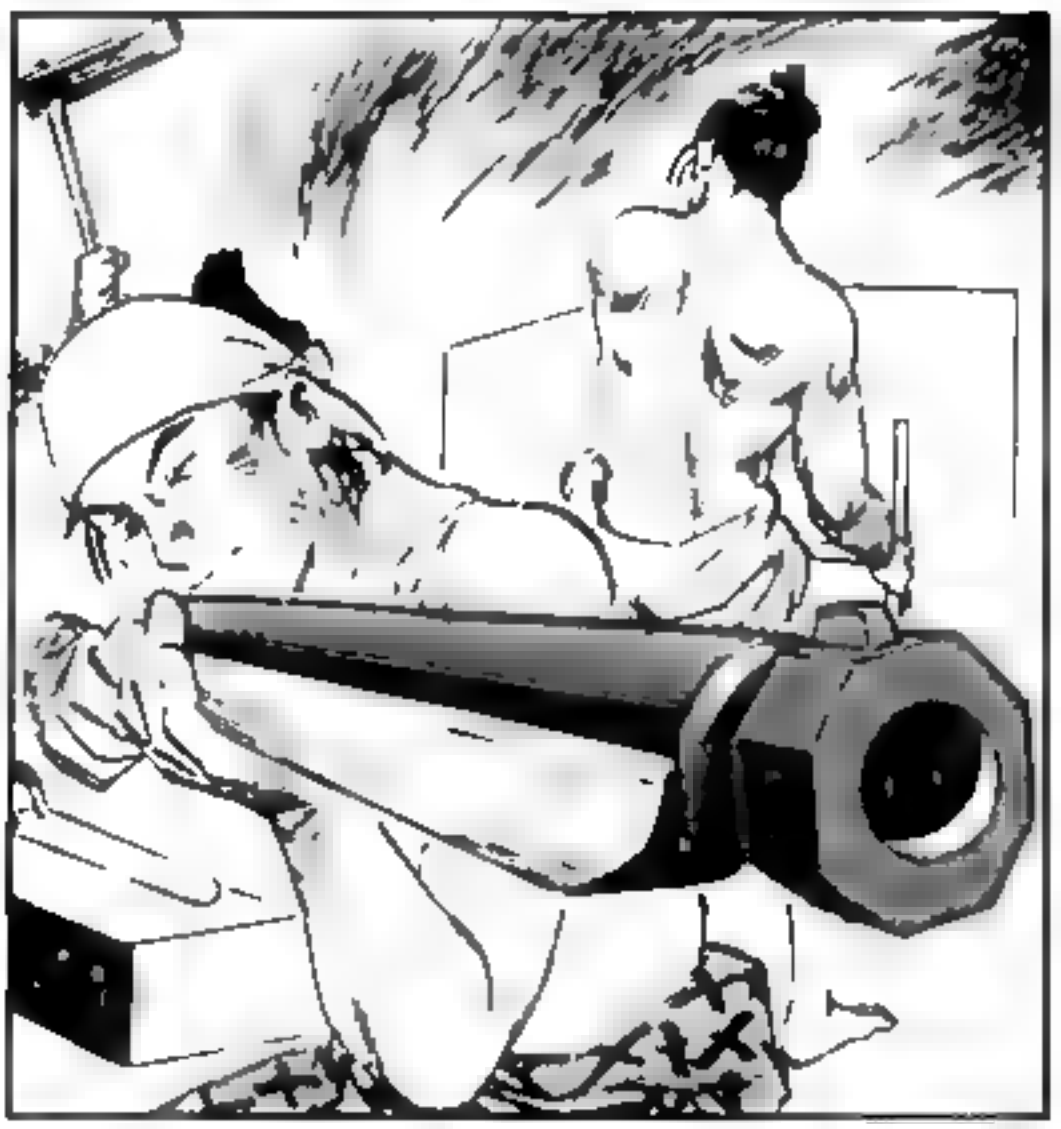
This is Inumaru from Satomi University. You could say he's one of my students...

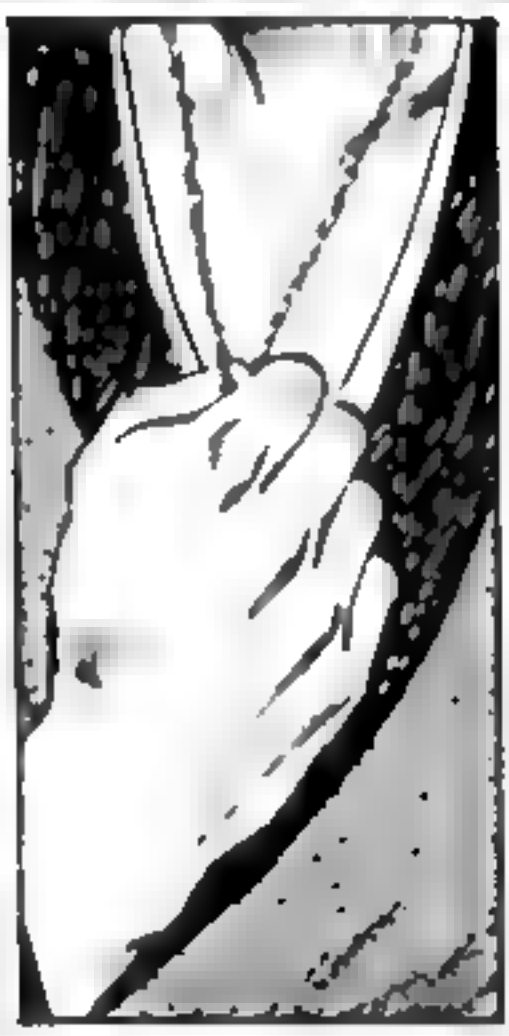
I went back to Fukuoka for summer vacation, but then I heard about the Uryu Island sympo-sium... I didn't expect to run into you here, Professor...

20

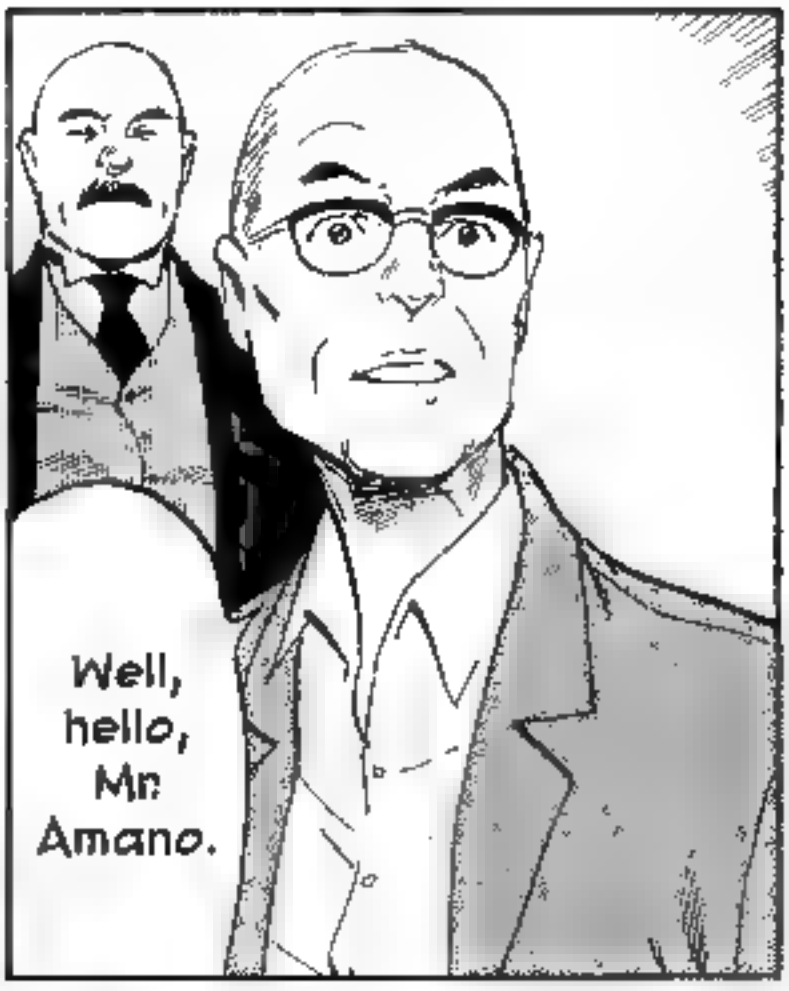
You mean the "Danoharu Blacksmiths"!? There's a theory that this clan worked as gunsmiths on Uryu Island...

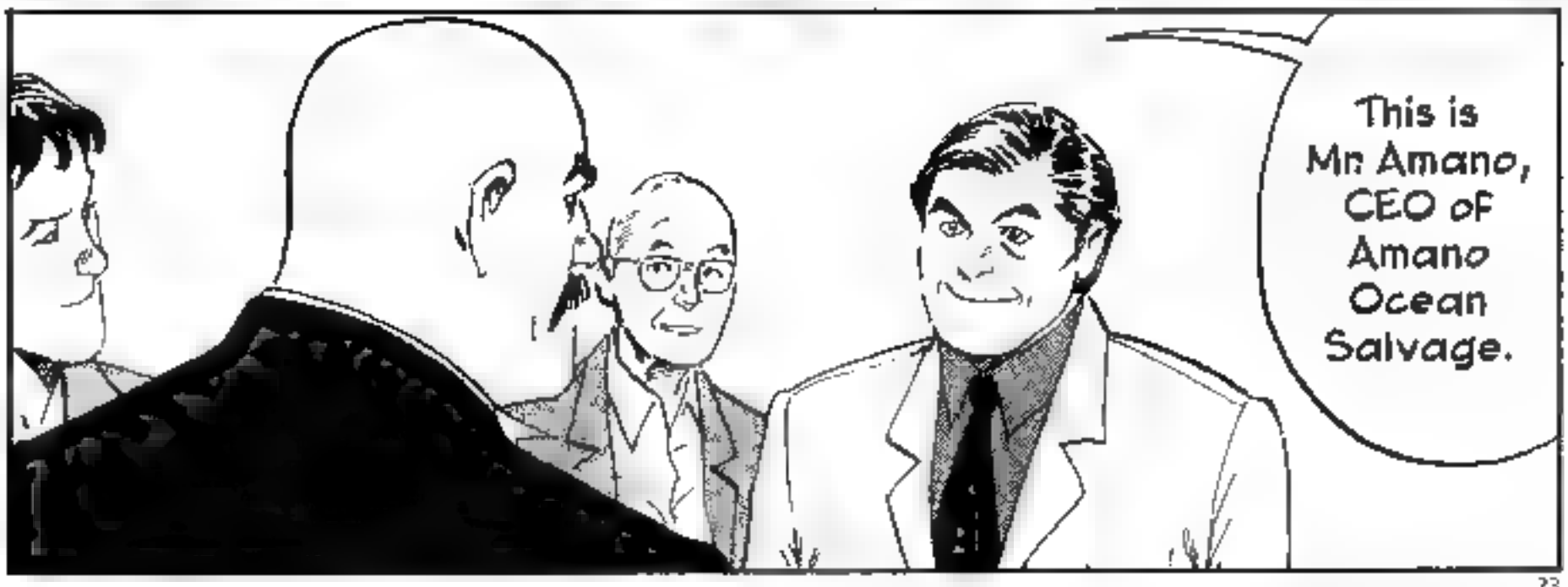
Yeah... My family lived in Oita up to my grandfather's generation, and they say even further back, they were blacksmiths on Uryu Island...

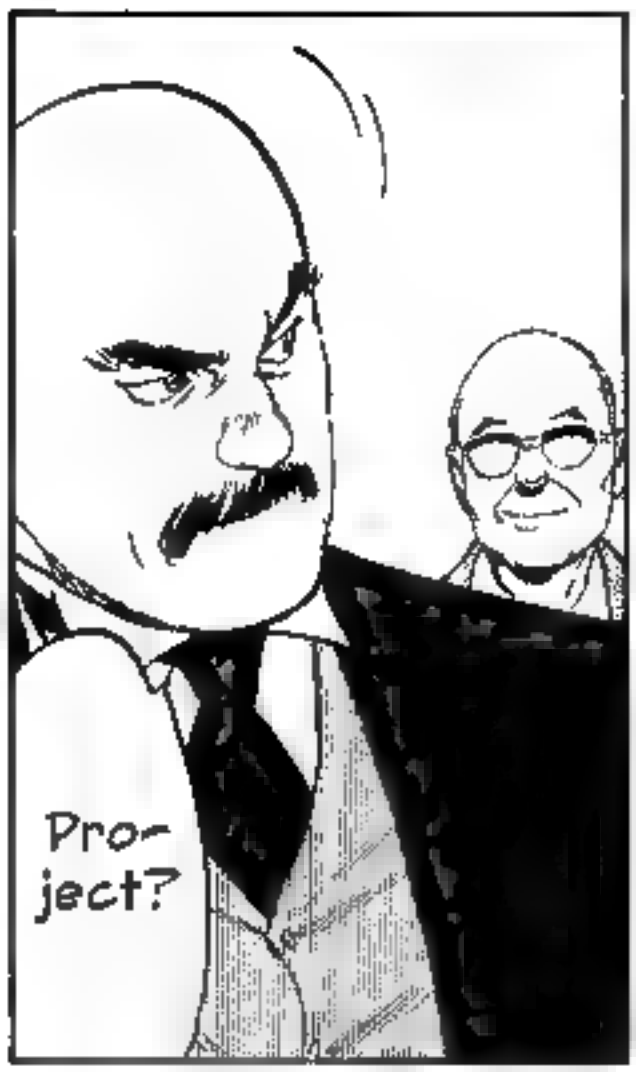




Sorry I'm late!


Well, hello, Mr Amano.


This is Mr Amano, CEO of Amano Ocean Salvage.

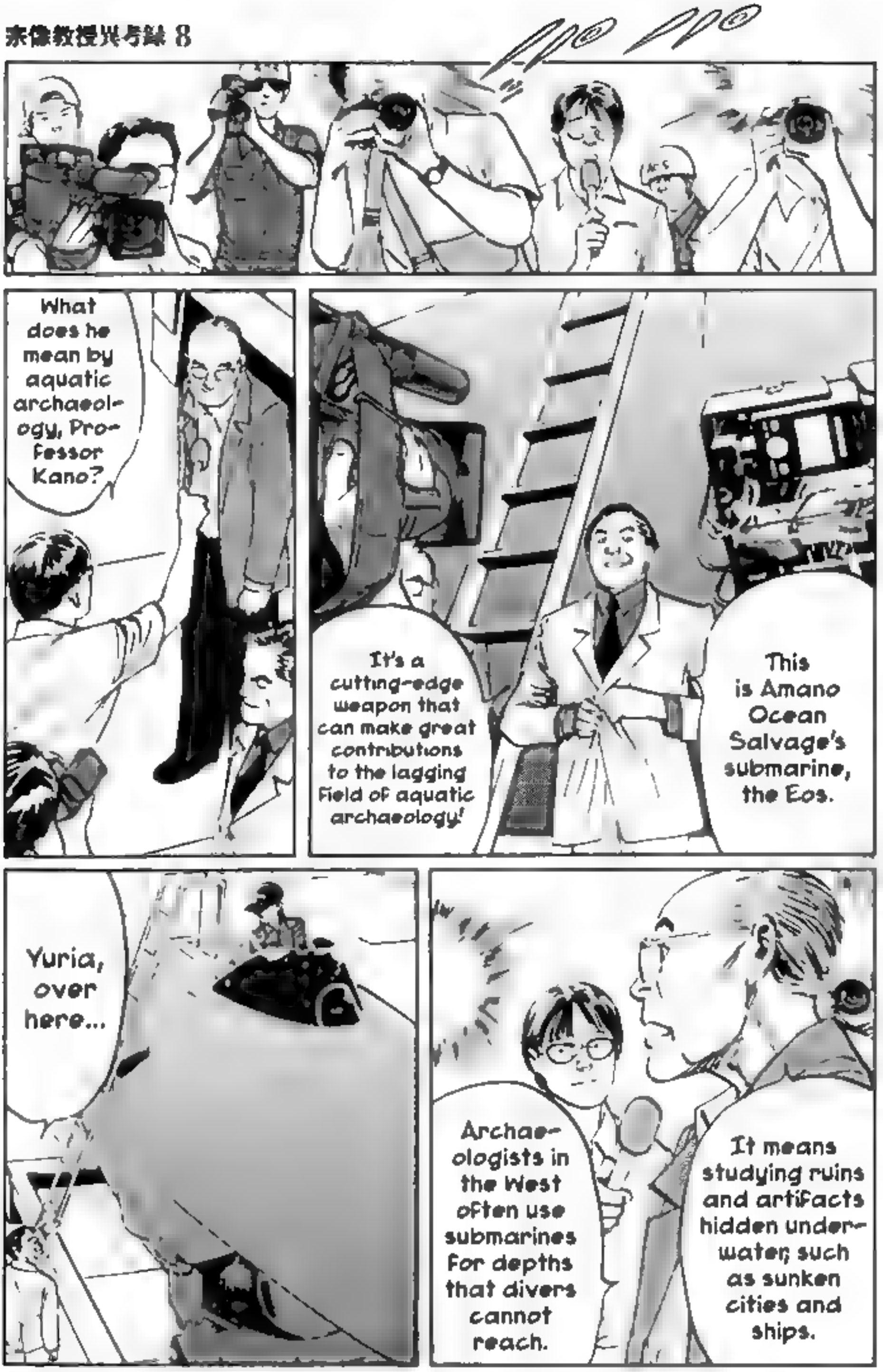

Pro-ject?

I was hoping you and Professor Kano could join me for a little project my company is putting together!
Hello, Professor Munakata. I heard your presentation earlier, and I realized you were saying exactly what I was thinking.

Oita Bay is just up ahead!

I'll explain in the car I've already briefed Professor Kano about this a number of times...

Oita Bay


What does he mean by aquatic archaeol-ogy, Pro-fessor Kano?
It's a cutting-edge weapon that can make great contributions to the lagging field of aquatic archaeology!
This is Amano Ocean Salvage's submarine, the Eos.
Yuria, over here...
Archae-ologists in the West often use submarines for depths that divers cannot reach.
It means studying ruins and artifacts hidden under-water, such as sunken cities and ships.

As a matter of fact, when we decided to introduce this submarine, we employed Kano Yuria as the pilot, who happens to be Professor Kano's granddaughter.

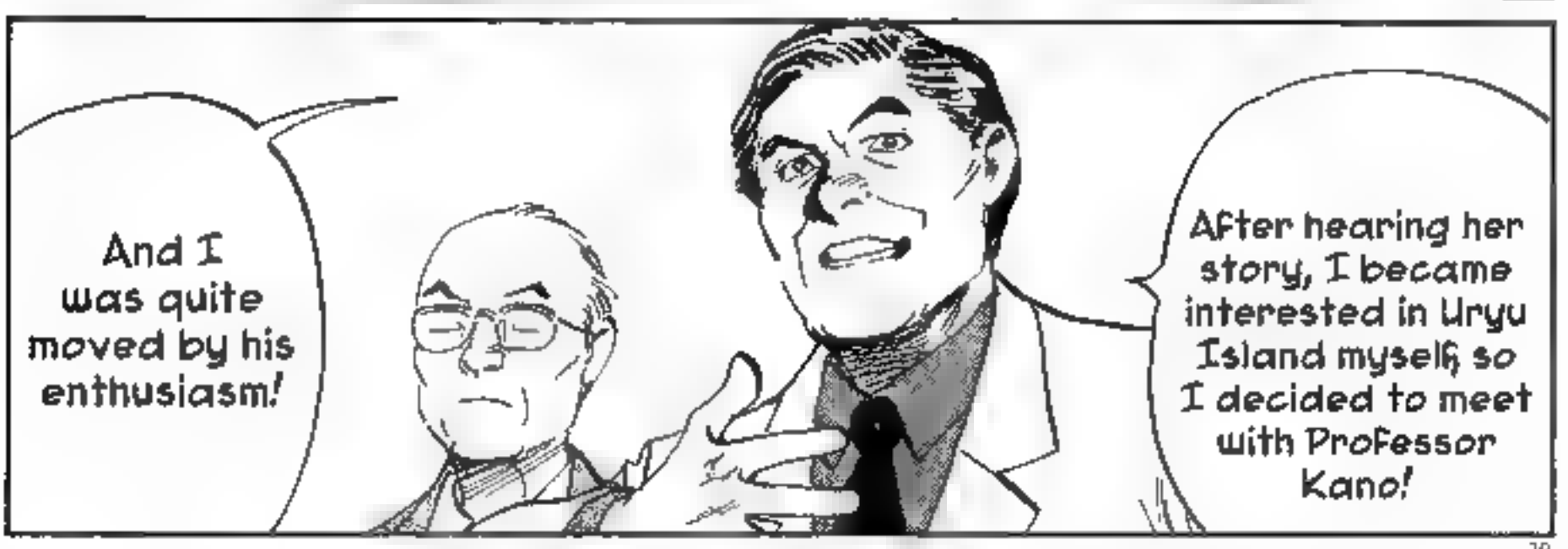
They had a home by the port of "Okinohama" where they provide lodging for travellers.

Because my grandfather has told me that our ancestors lived on Uryu Island.

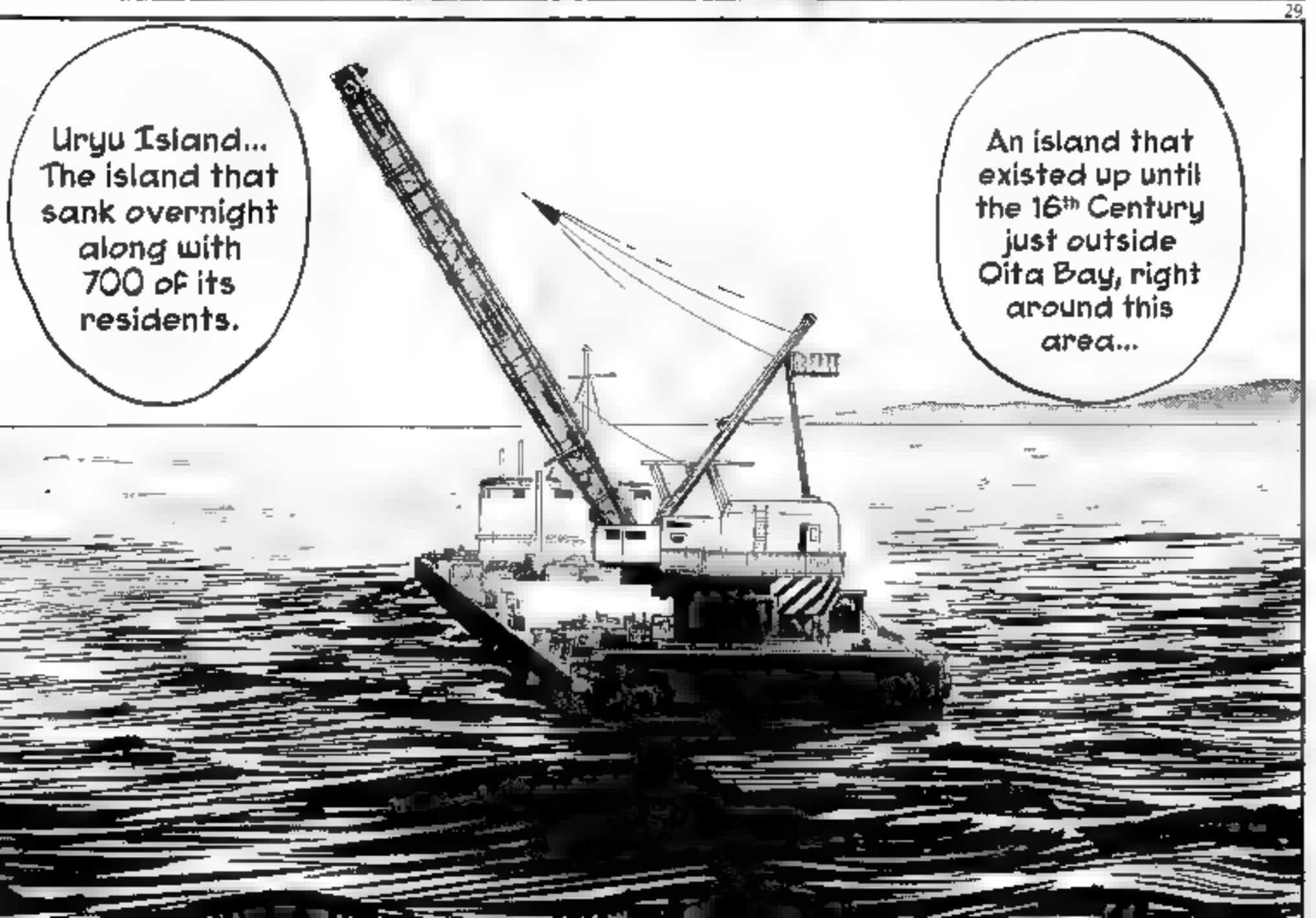
She mastered piloting while studying abroad in America, for the express reason of wanting to study Uryu Island one day.

And why is that, then?

I suppose he had a reason to be so devoted to researching the island.
So they're descend-ants of the survivors of Uryu Island, too...


And I was quite moved by his enthusiasm!
After hearing her story, I became interested in Uryu Island myself, so I decided to meet with Professor Kano!




Uryu Island... The island that sank overnight along with 700 of its residents.
An island that existed up until the 16th Century just outside Oita Bay, right around this area...

And with renowned Professor Munakata on board with us, we would like to begin our first exploration!!
This is a very fitting first job for the Eos. In honor of that, I'm doing this free of charge!

Oh, really? So our families might've been neighbors on Uryu Island...
Ishi-maru?

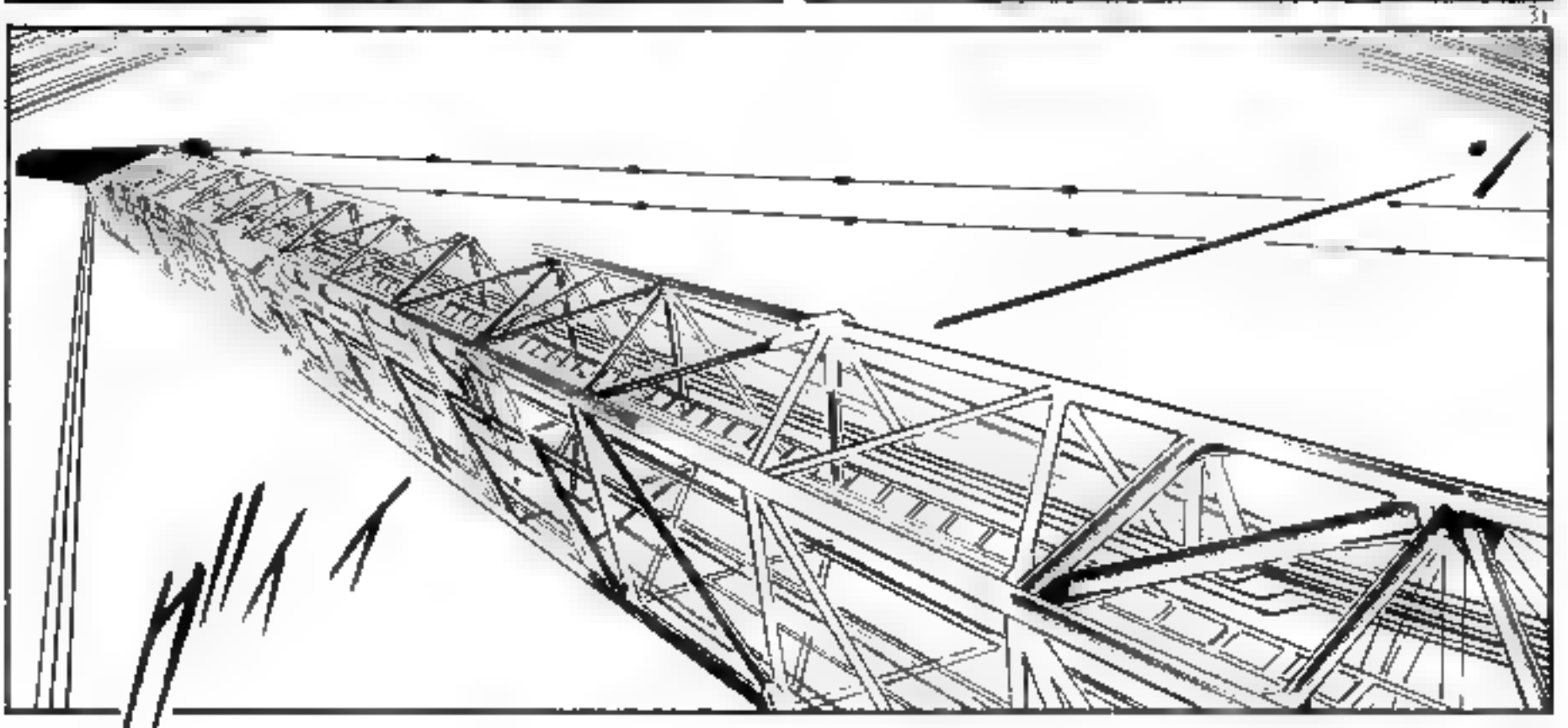
It seems I've walked right into one of their publicity stunts. Although a sub-marine explora-tion does sound quite appealing, doesn't it, Ishimaru?

Oh...
So I'd like to see what's on the ocean floor as well...
I've heard that my ancestors worked as blacksmiths, and they might've even been gunsmiths.

Oh, well then it's fine. I'll just wait here till Professor Munakata comes back.
Take care... Yuria.

Well, I'm sorry, but we're at maximum capacity already.
And the CEO instructed me not to let anyone unauthorized on, not even the press...

Thank you... Ishimaru, was it...?



Mothership, this is the Eos. Radio functional. Visibility is low, so I'm turning the lights on.

It's sloped... This terrain looks like a very gradual

Those sediments have been piling up for 400 years since the [illegible] Mr. Amano.

I can only see the ocean floor covered in sludge and dirt...

Beppu Bay has a bowl-like submarine topography, with a shallow coast and the deepest point being 70m under the surface.

It's unlikely that the island retained its current shape as it sank due to subsidence, and there are no signs of it, either

We believe that these are traces of Uryu Island, an island of sand that towered above the shallows, then collapsed off of the cliff

Landslide Traces

Uryu Island

Oita Bay

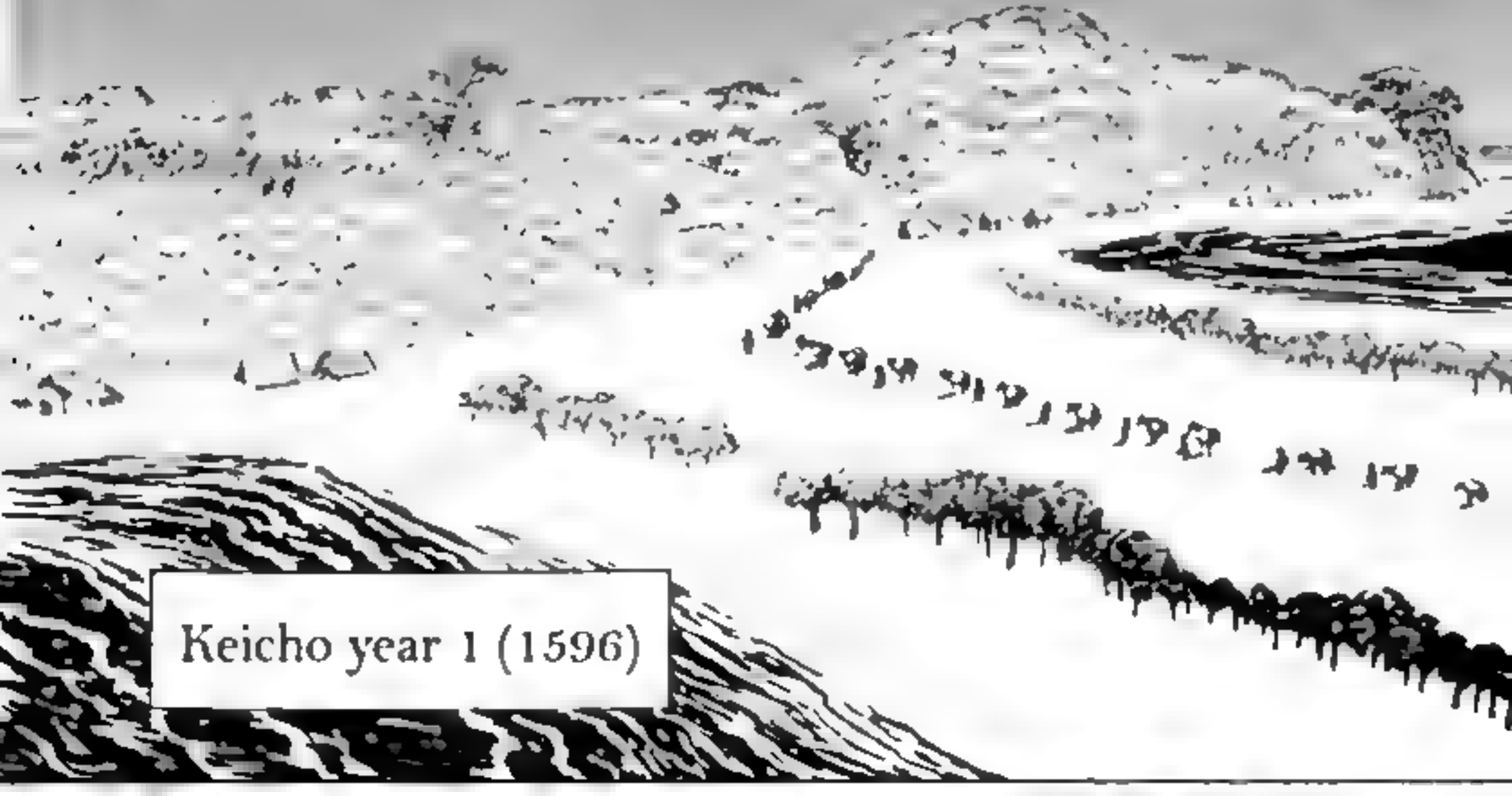
Former Coastline

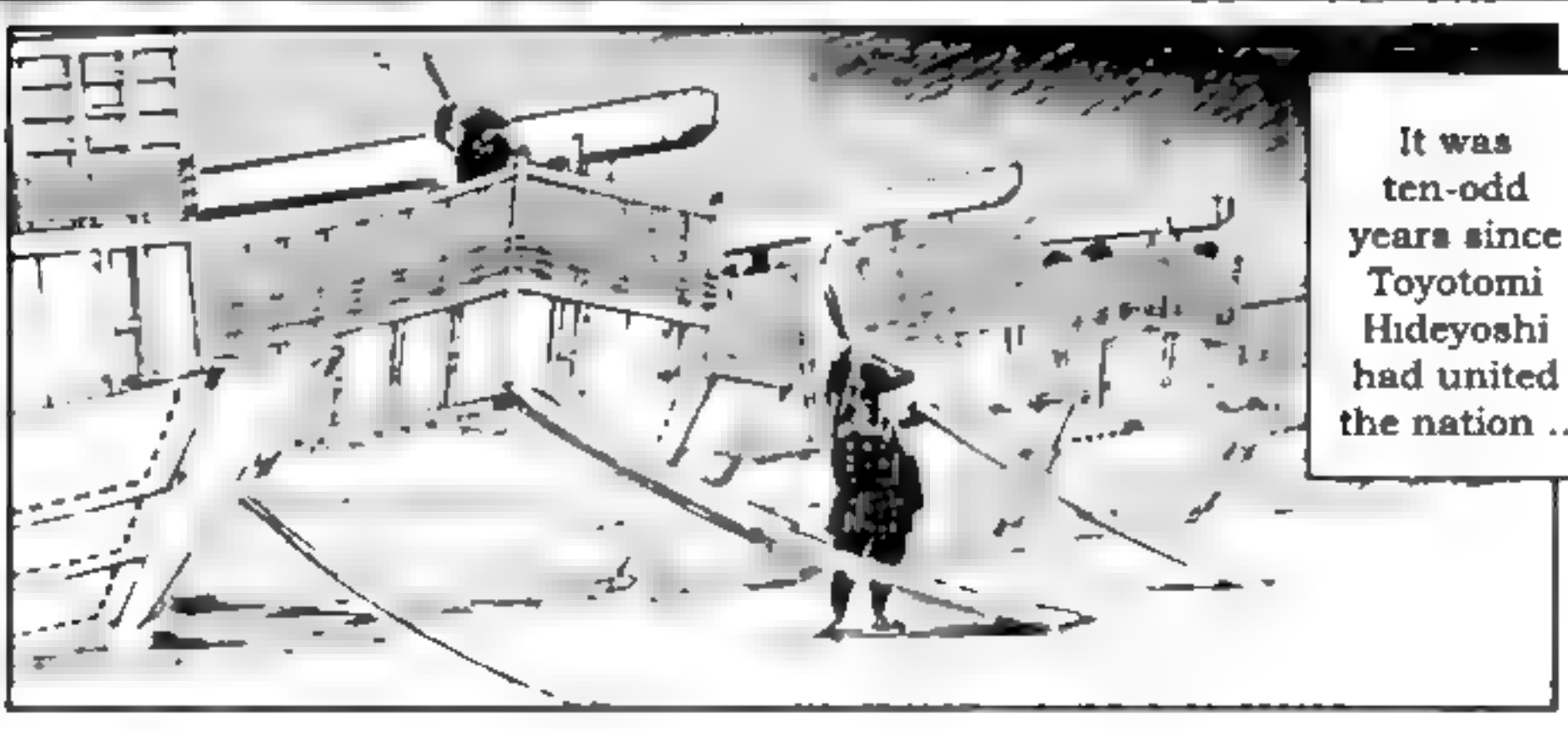
But investigations from the surface during the 1970s found what appeared to be traces of a large "landslide" along the underwater cliff

We're going from a depth of 10 to 20m... This is the hypothesized location of Uryu Island...!!

Take us along the slope to the traces of the landslide, Yuria!

There's nothing here. The flat sea bed just connects to the slope.

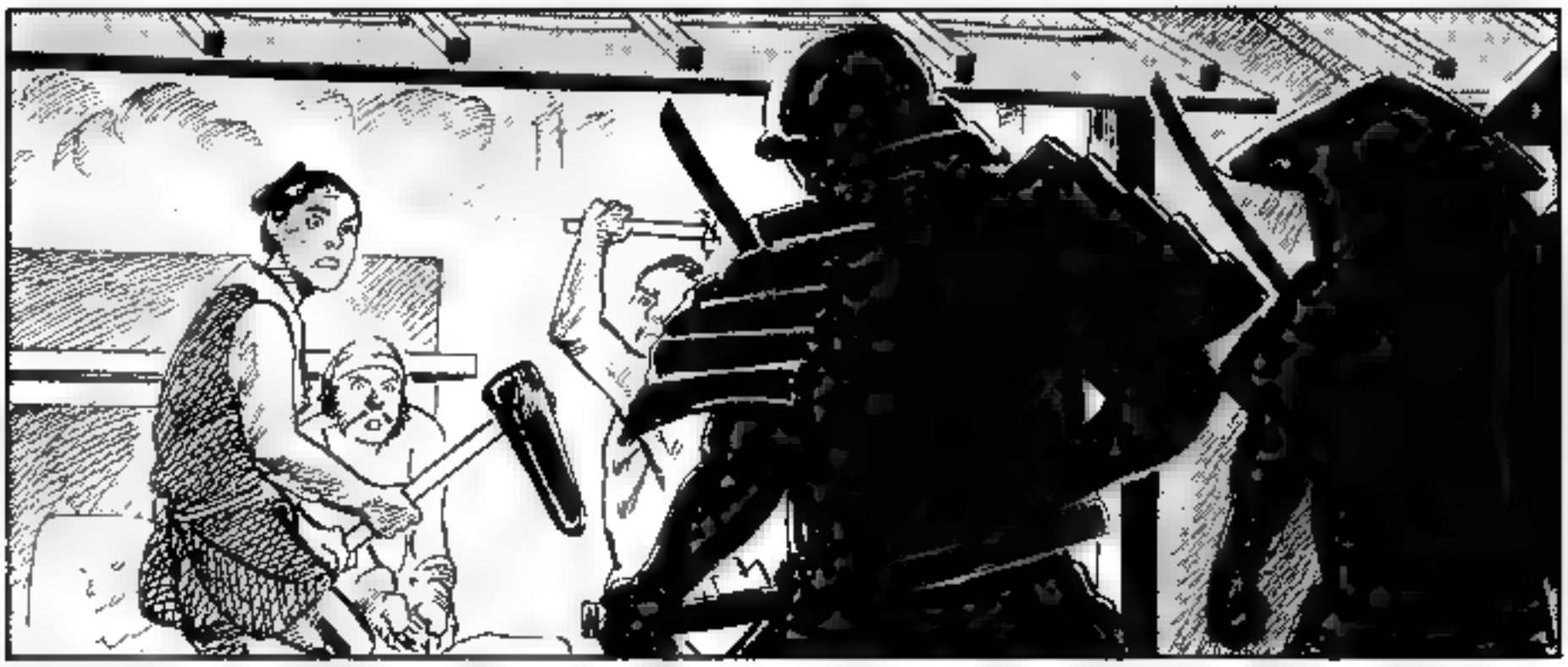

Keicho year 1 (1596)

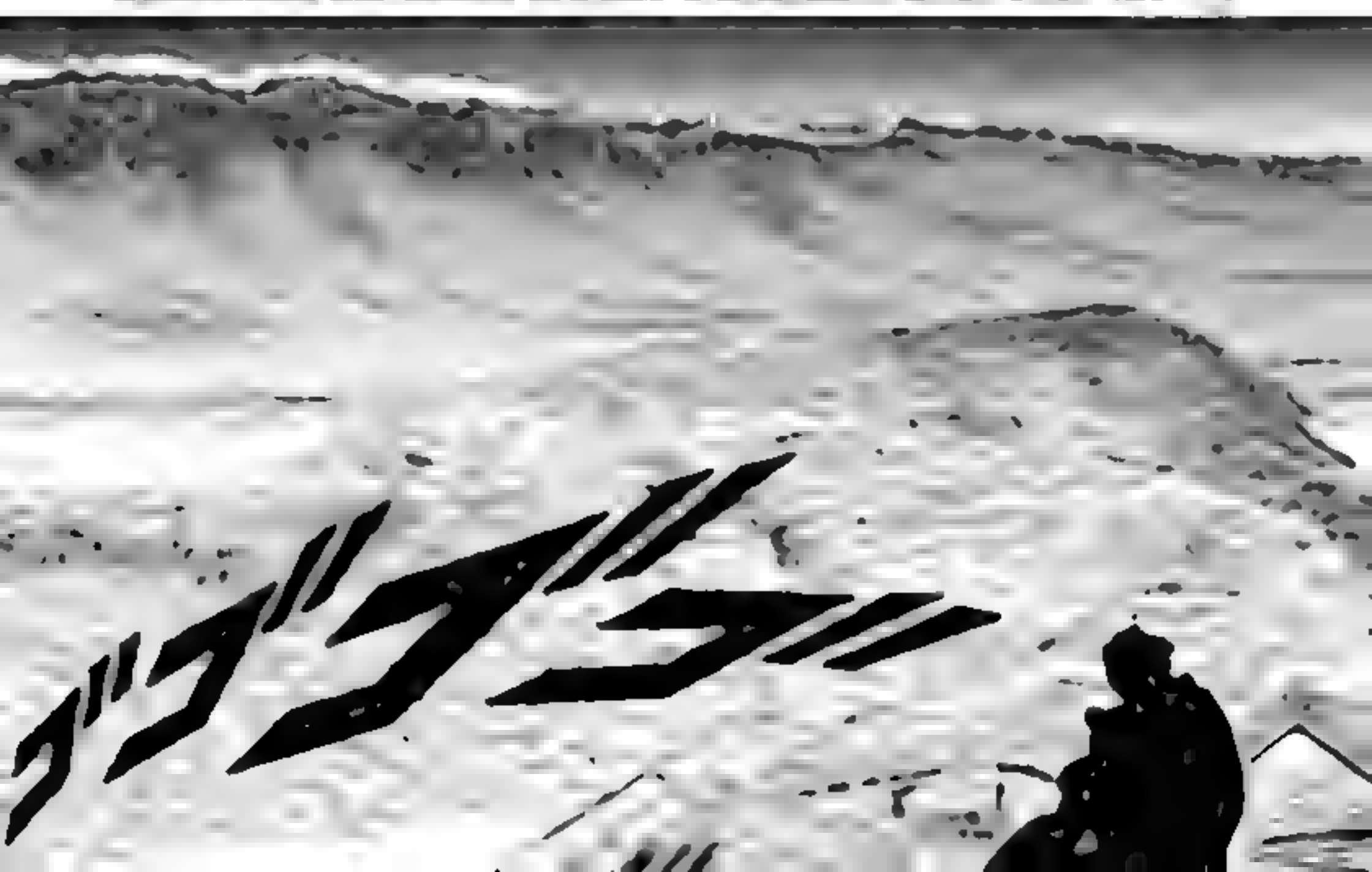

It was ten-odd years since Toyotomi Hideyoshi had united the nation ..

Otomo Sorin, who had accepted Christianity, had passed away, and Bungo had fallen into Toyotomi's hands

On the night of July 12th, the missionary Luis Frois recorded that the Toyotomi Army's fleet was moored at "Okinohama" harbor for collecting taxes, and was in the process of loading their ships.

The people's weapons were removed by the policy of the "Sword Hunt", and Christianity was strictly banned.

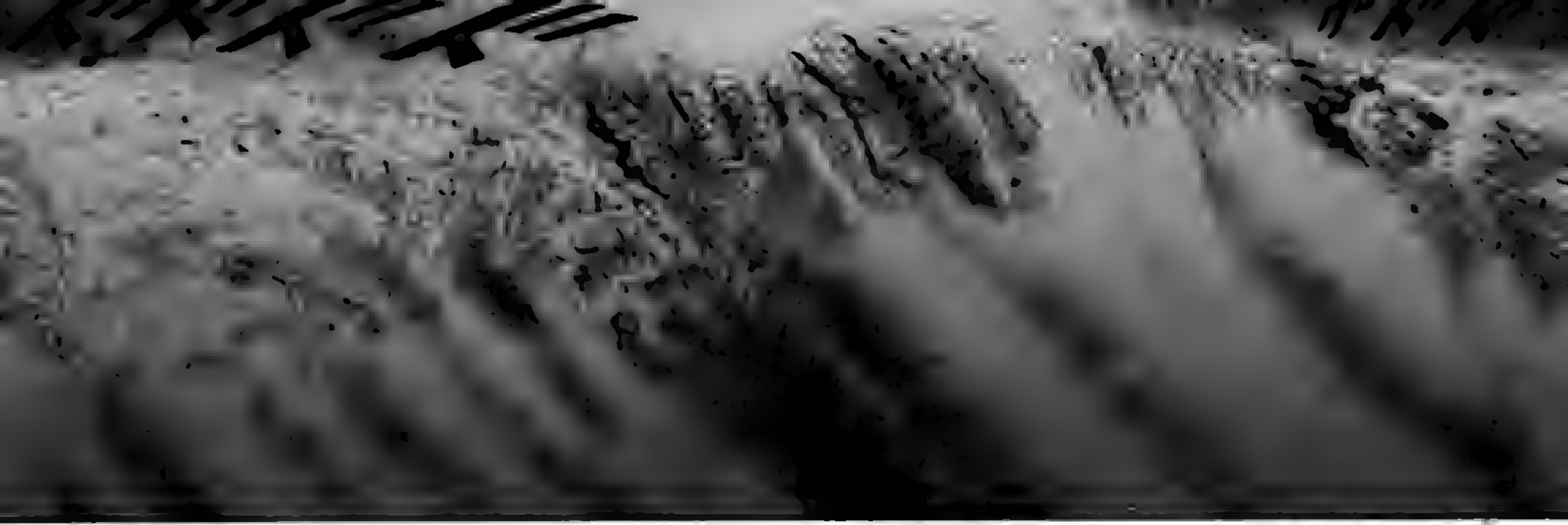


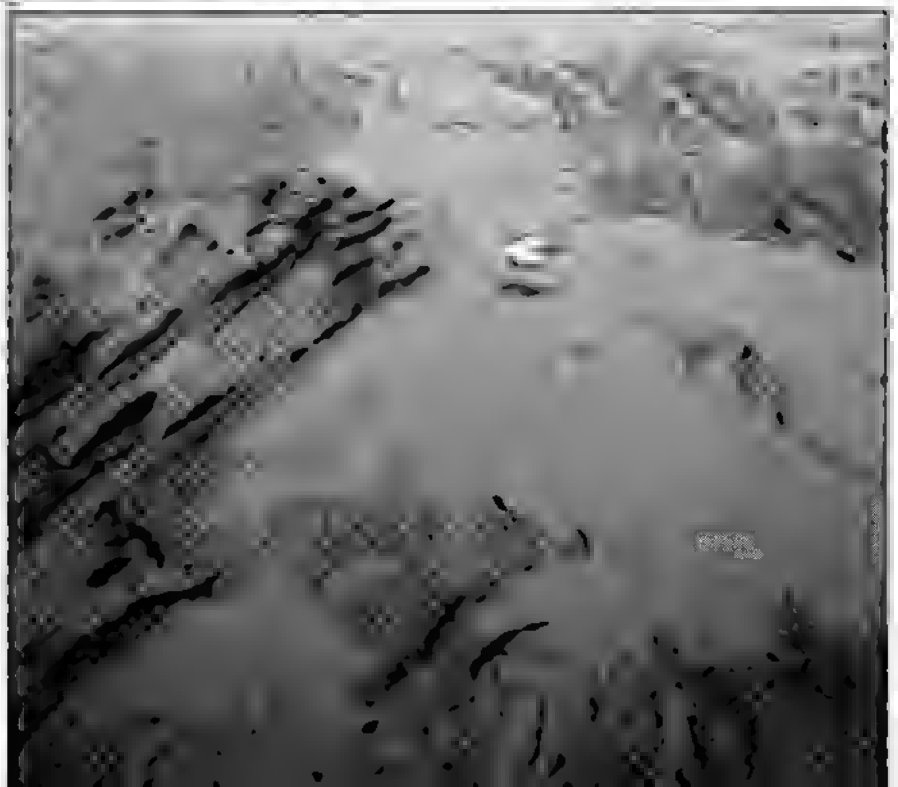


And after the tsunami had receded, the sand island had "liquefied" !!

When Beppu Bay was assailed by the "Great Keicho Earthquake" and the tsunami that followed, Uryu Island was washed away by waves several times.

The island continued to collapse, and the sand slid along the slope in an unending





Any UMP response, Yuria?
Metal detector, Ian?
What is this UMP?

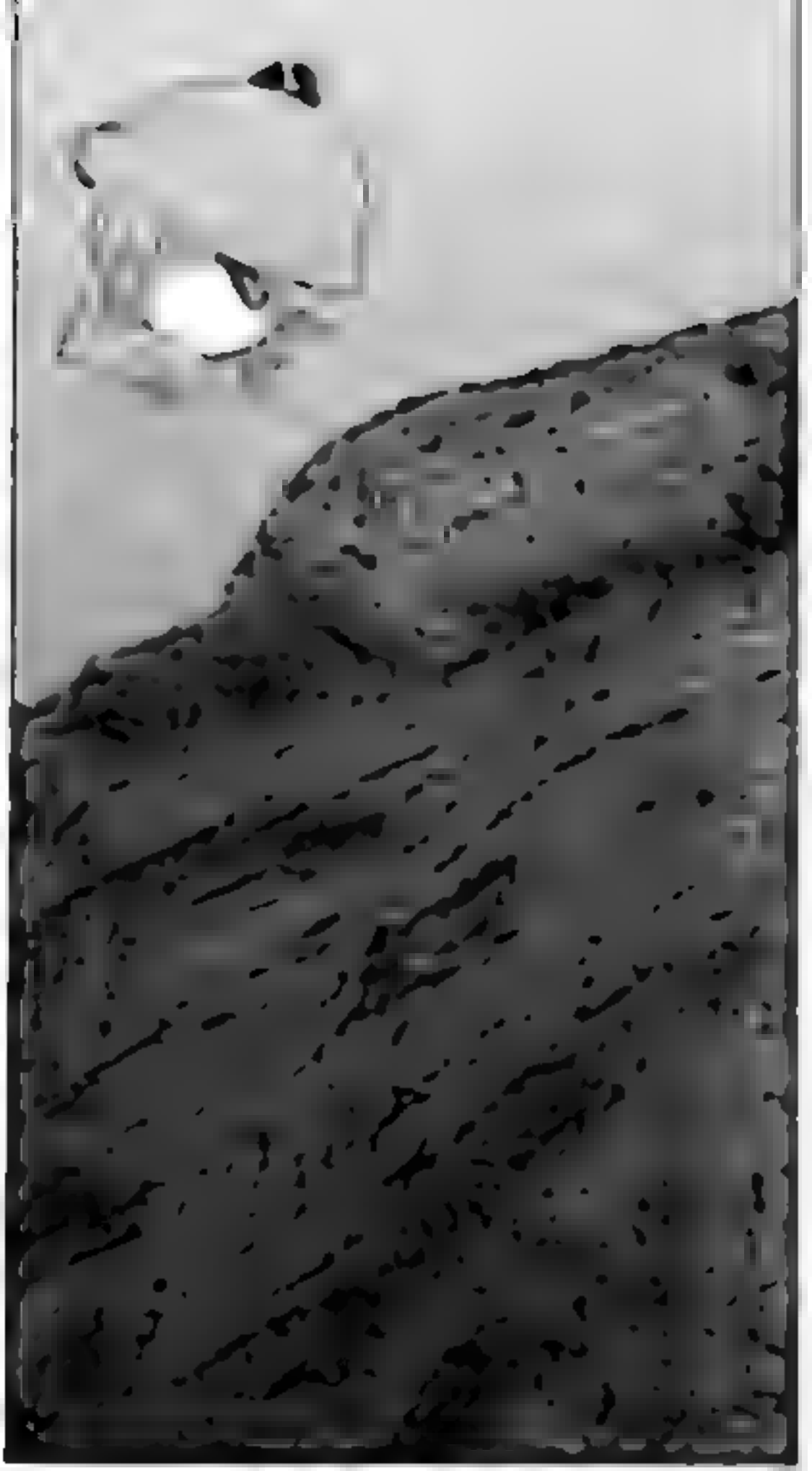
That means that if we can find even just one gun, it could prove that Uryu Island existed!

Is that really your only purpose!?

You said yourself, Professor Munakata, that they may have built guns on that island.

I've got a response! It's at a depth of 25m!

Professor Munakata, a metallic response may prove to be a lead to the remains of the island. I consented to this.



*PROPULSION DEVICE USED IN POSTURE CONTROL.

C...Could that be a "Nation-Destroyer"

It's the name that Otomo Sorin, lord of Bungo, gave to the cannons he imported from Portugal. It has enough noise and power to destroy a nation!
It looks just like the existing ones!

When the Shimazu Army of Satsuma invaded, they placed it in Usuki Castle and fired... This greatly shocked the people.

They say that Otomo Sorin was the first man in Japan to use cannons in war.

The name "Nation-Destroyer" must have come from his wonder at its destructive force.

Sorin sought trade with Portugal out of a desire for guns, cannons, and gunpowder.

For that reason, he accepted Christianity, and Sorin himself took on the Christian name "Francis".

And as a Christian Lord, he invited Xavier into his domain and supported his proselytization...

So importing weapons came in a package deal with Christianity.

Meanwhile, there's a possibility that he was building prototypes of domestic "Nation-Destroyer" cannons, to say nothing of guns.

But the invasion of the Shimazu Army of Satsuma crushed his dream of conquering Kyushu.

Sorin passed away, and his son was relocated* by Hideyoshi. This was three years before the Great Keicho Earth-quake.

*A FEUDAL LORD BEING FORCIBLY DISPLACED FROM HIS DOMAIN.

BURIED!? YOU THINK THEY BURIED THE CANNONS AND GUNS ON URYU ISLAND!?

Well, there is such a theory. When the ruler changes, they may be dangerous to possess.

The metallic responses are continuing as we follow the slope. It looks like there were other cannons.

54

Then we can prove that Uryu Island, historically unrecognized for so long, existed beyond the shadow of a doubt, and did, in fact, sink!

.....

5

I hope we find buildings and house-ware, not just cannons...

That would be definite proof that there was an island here.

E-Exactly
The name Uryu Island first appeared in a document written a century after its "Fall".
Professor Kano, I believe one of the reasons its existence has not been recognized is that the name "Uryu Island" does not appear in any ancient records
Even Luis Frois' records only mention an "[illegible]" vanishing into the ocean, with no mention of Uryu Island.
So there is a strong theory that the island did not exist, and it was merely part of the coast or a sandbank that was washed away by the tsunami.
But I've finally solved that mystery!
I found it strange that the island's name was absent from ancient times to the warring States...
That's what I noticed when I skimmed through the materials for the symposium...

They all have to do with "iron"!

Uryu Island's existence, its sinking, and the fact that there were no prior records of the island...

With iron ...!?

Throughout the Warring States Period, iron was what the feudal lords needed most. Iron was used in all weapons, from swords, to spears, to armor to helmets...

And in the age where guns and cannons were taking the stage, they required iron in even larger quantities.

But in order to efficiently gather that sand, they undoubtedly used a method called "*kanna-nagashi*" to mine iron sand from the mountains.

But on the Japanese archipelago that lacks iron ore, the only iron resource is the iron sand. Bungo was blessed with iron sand...

They would first find a granite mountain containing lots of iron sand, locate a part that had softened from erosion, and cut through it.

They would repeat this sorting to collect the iron sand, damming up the water in a number of places. The rest of the sand was washed away downstream

They then drew water from the river, and when they dropped the vast quantities of sand into the water and stirred, the heavy iron sand would sink to the bottom.

The iron sand content was a mere 0.1-0.5%.

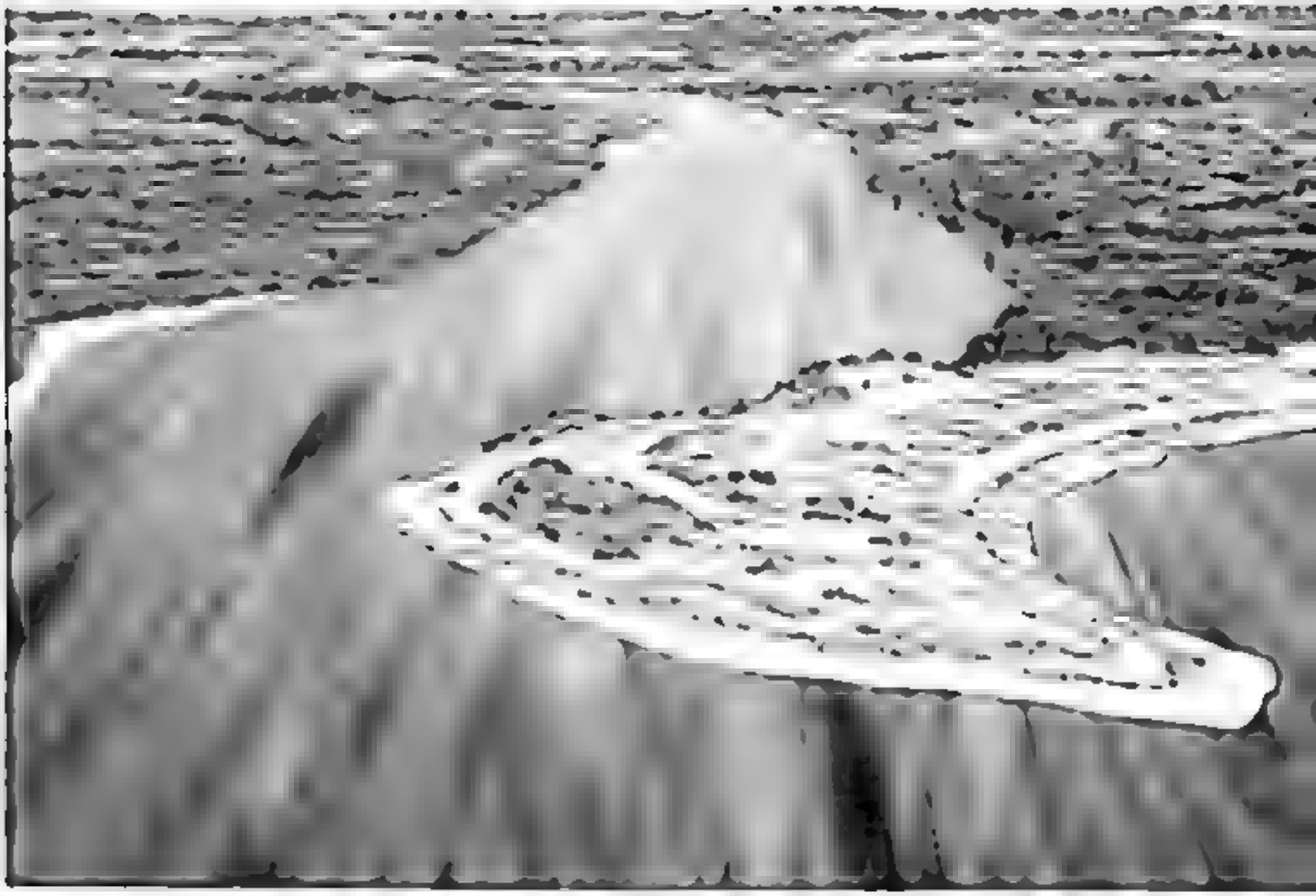
And to obtain 2.5 tons of iron from the *tatara* furnaces, they would need 13 tons of iron sand.

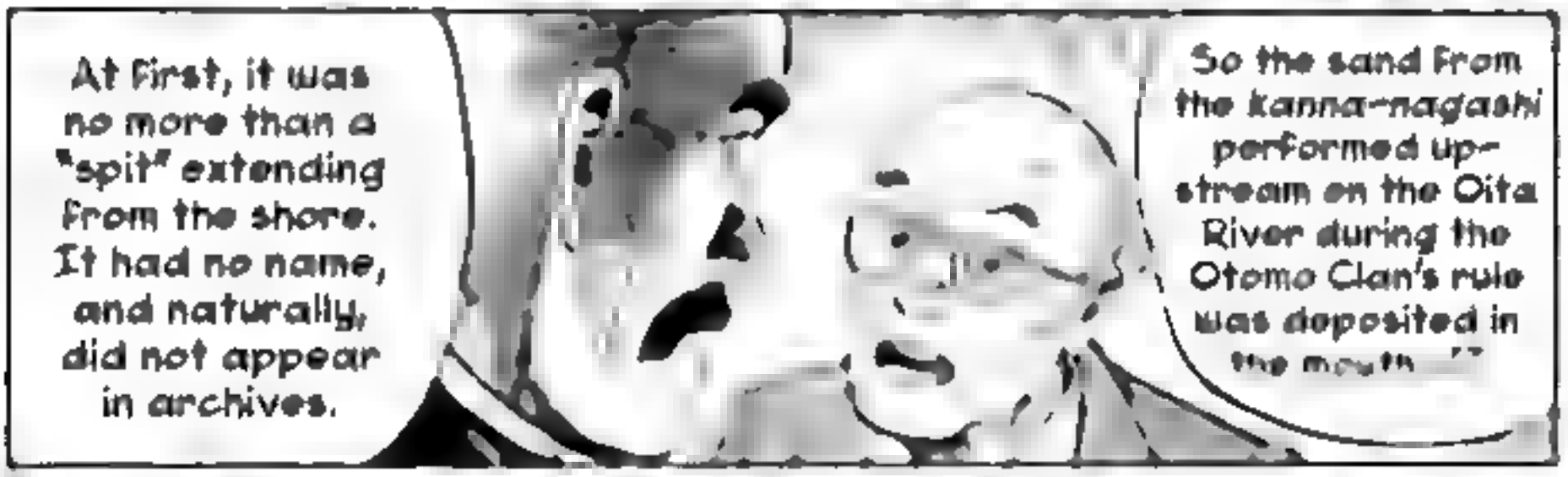
In other words .

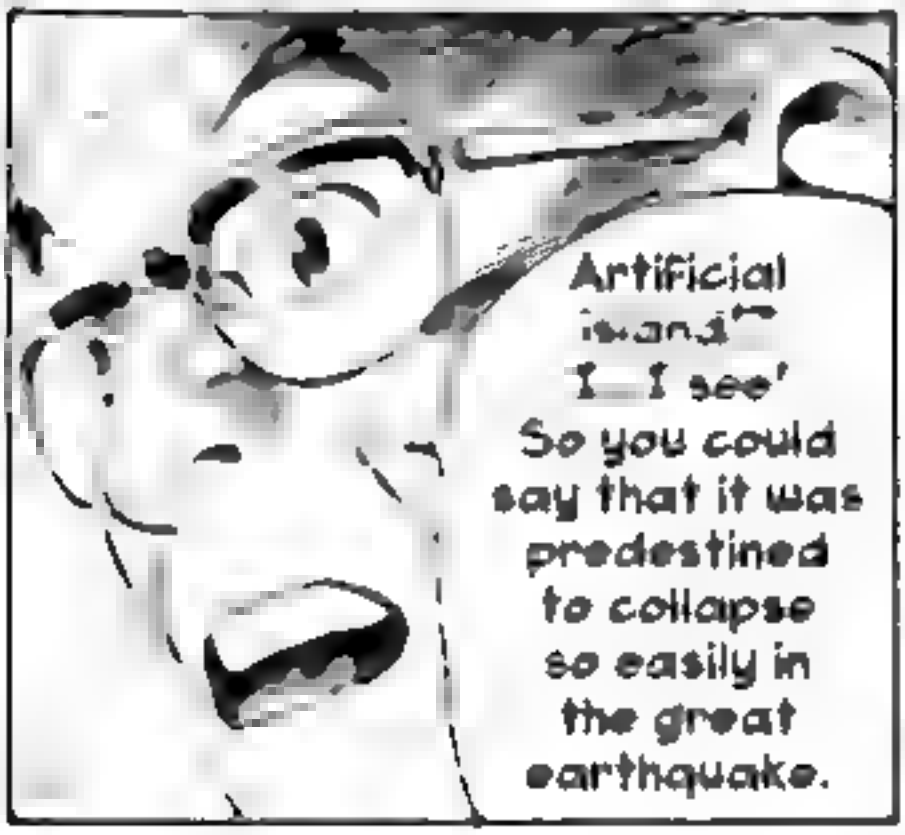
In order to mine that much iron sand, they had to cut through the mountain by the ton.

An entire mountain's worth of sand was cut away and sent downstream. Naturally, it was deposited downstream.

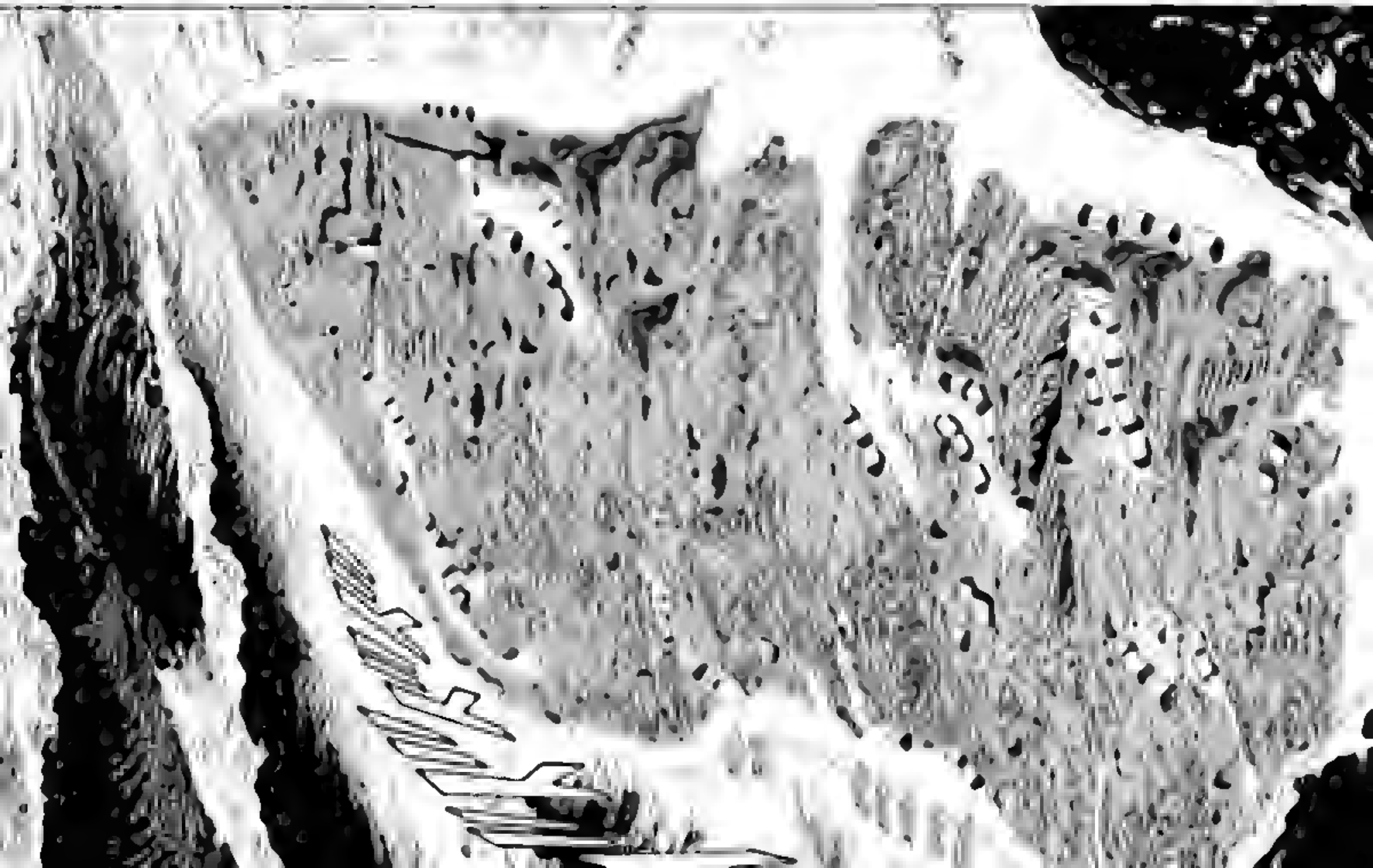
As a matter of fact, there are records of paddies being harmed by sand due to kanna-nagashi being performed upstream.
What ...!?
That is how big an impact ironworking had on the environ-ment.
On the other hand, there are plenty of examples of sand settling downstream to form sandbanks, which would become new arable land.
Correct!
Y...You mean that Uryu Island was ...!?




At first, it was no more than a "spit" extending from the shore. It had no name, and naturally, did not appear in archives.
So the sand from the kanna-nagashi performed up-stream on the Oita River during the Otomo Clan's rule was deposited in the mouth...


Artificial island... I... I see! So you could say that it was predestined to collapse so easily in the great earthquake.

But it grew into an island in a matter of a few decades to a century. An artificial island of sorts!



W...WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?

Our contract states that we hold the rights to any excavated objects.

S... STOP IT! YOU'LL DAMAGE THE ARTI-FACTS, MR. AMANO!

We'll gain new sponsors, as well. What better way to advertise our new business than this?

If we take back what might just be the first domestically-produced cannon in Japan, this investigation will draw attention.

I KNEW IT ALL ALONG! YOU INSTALLED THAT METAL DETECTOR TO FIND OBJECTS OF MONETARY VALUE!

IT'S TOO HEAVY! THE ARM WON'T HOLD IT!

I CAN'T PULL IT OUT! PUT US IN REVERSE!

I OFFERED YOU MY SUBMARINE FREE OF CHARGE! WHAT'S WRONG WITH TAKING A LITTLE COMPENSATION?

ALMOST THERE! JUST THREE-FOUR TO PULL IT OUT!

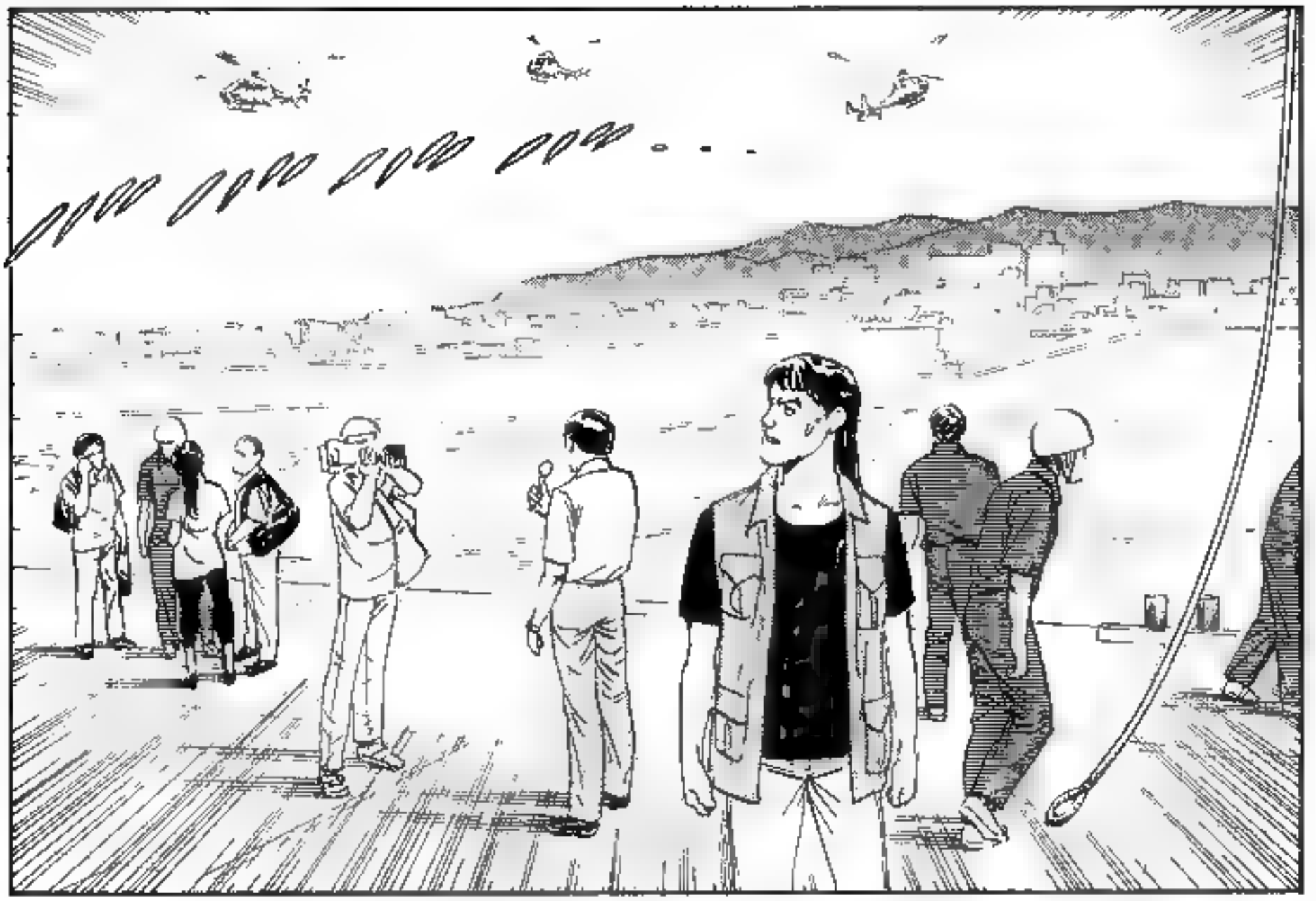
ドゴォォォ
ア!!
!

DIS-
TRESS
CALL
!?

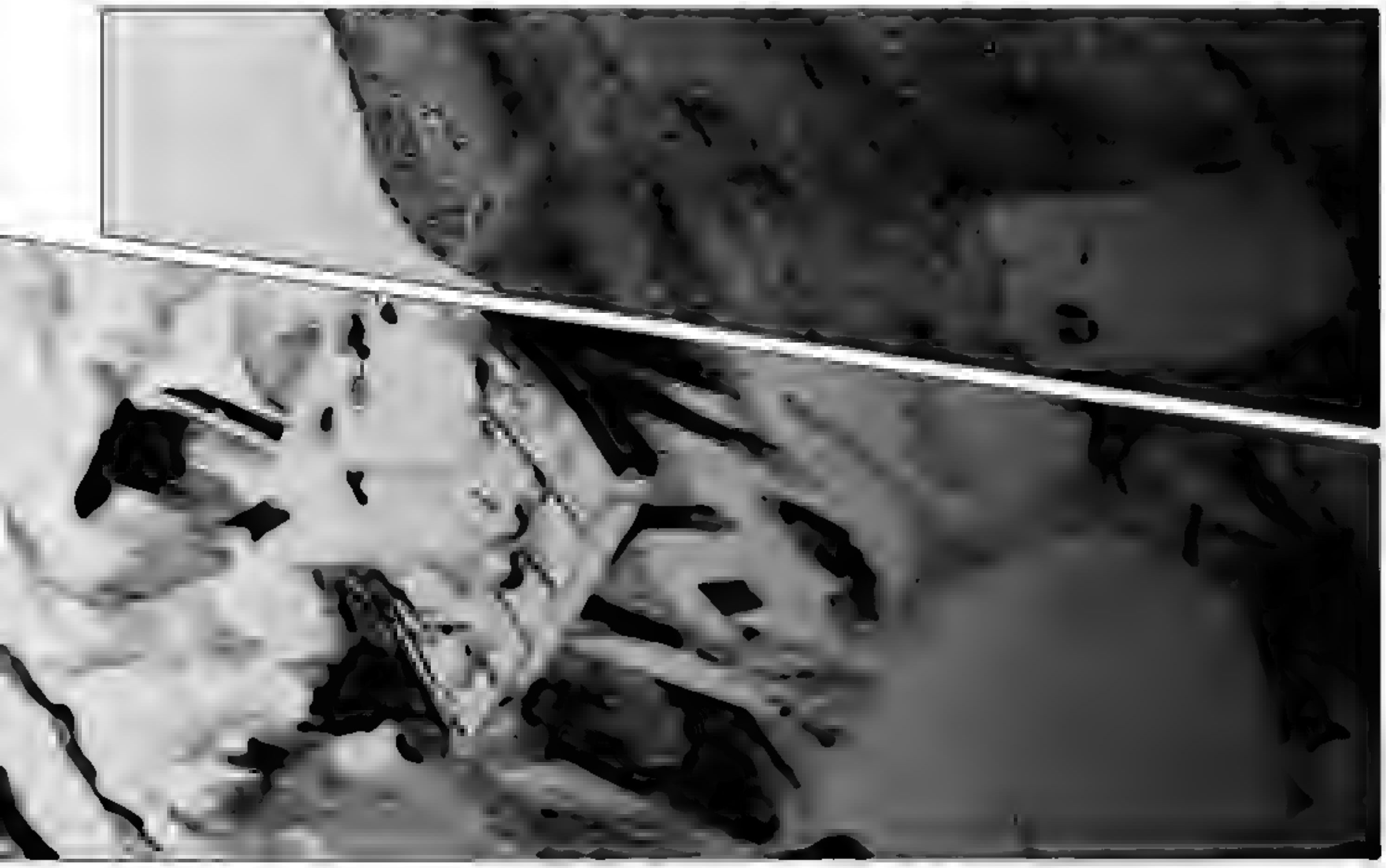
HOW ABOUT THE PEOPLE INSIDE THE SUB-MA-RINE !?

We don't know yet. The radio's been cut off...

T...They appear to have slipped down to the middle of the slope, at a depth of about 35m!!



Yuria...
Pro-
fessor
Muna-
kata...



It'll be sunset soon. We may not be able to continue our search till tomorrow.

Our visibility's too poor.
The seawater is clouded with sludge, and we can barely see a few meters ahead of us.

HAS THERE BEEN A SIGNAL? ANY RE-SPONSE FROM THE SUBMA-RINE!?

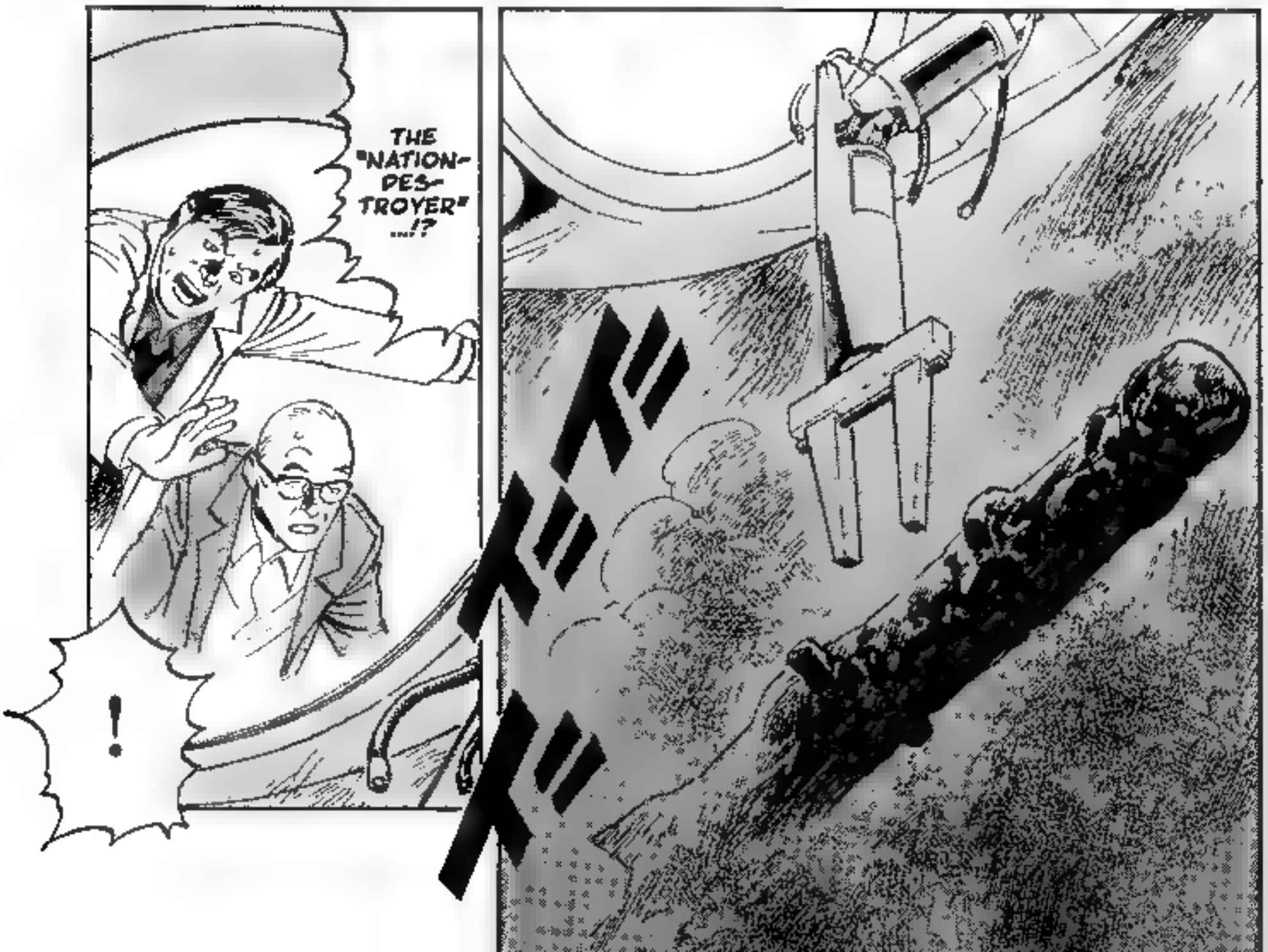
This much time's passed already, and they're neither responding nor surfacing...
Either there's been a major malfunction, or something happened to the passengers...!

Unfortunately, the voltage is too low, and we can't fill or drain the ballast tanks.

Y...You've fixed the electrical systems, have you? You must be tired, Yuria. Why not take a break?

Can't sur-face!?
If we can't fill or drain the ballast tanks, doesn't that mean we can't surface?

They've probably started a search already, and they should be able to detect our general location.
W-W-W... WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO US? ARE WE GONNA DIE HERE ON THE OCEAN FLOOR!?


THE "NATION-DES-TROYER" ...!?
!
KI=
KI=
KI=

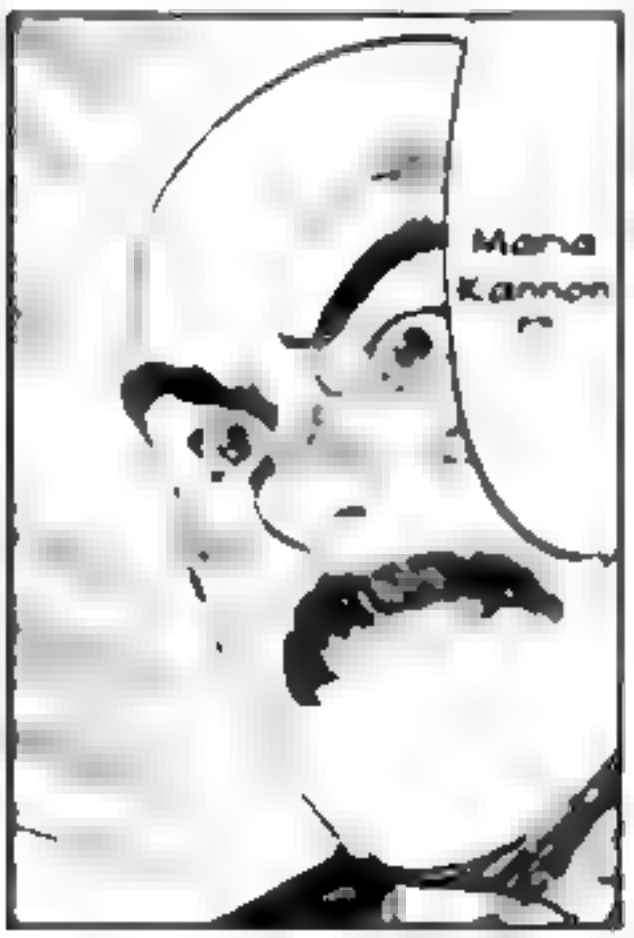
It's a building... A sign of life on Uryu Island!

Surely buried in sand after all... You would never have been able to tell from the surface

The building straight ahead seems to be a small shrine.
I see something inside it...

A statue of Kannon No!

That's a Maria Kannon!!


Maria Kannon

The covert Christians worshipped it, disguised as a statue of Kannon...

I see. It's a statue of the Madonna holding the young Jesus...

After the Christian lords of the Otomo Clan left, this must have been how the islanders maintained their faith in the age of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's anti-Christian policies...

80

It looks like Uryu Island took a lot of secrets with it as it sank...

But with the weapons, cannons, and Christianity... It may have also been that the secrets of the island were a dangerous taboo even well into the Edo Period.

I thought that the origin of the island was the reason that the name Uryu Island was not recorded until a century after it sank...

I can't believe you scholars can be so calm at a time like this! Can't we use the radio yet!?

I'm working on it!

U...U NNN GGH HH...

UH-HUH... ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS UNSTABLE... UHHUH... UNABLE TO SUR-FACE!?

CAN YOU PLEASE REPEAT THAT!?

WE'VE GOT A CALL ...!!

MY GRANDFATHER... PROFESSOR KANO IS HAVING A HEART ATTACK! IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN IN PAIN FOR A WHILE, BUT HASN'T TOLD ANYONE ABOUT IT.

.....!!

WE NEED TO TAKE HIM TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY... PLEASE, HELP!!

HUFF HUFF

I may not look it, but I was raised in Genkai, and I've been skin diving ever since I was a kid! I did scuba diving in high school, too!

Are you serious!?

He won't last if we wait for morning. We have to save them right away!

But we'll have a higher chance of finding them if more of us are looking. Let me help!!

Alright, alright! Then we'll go back down there. You leave this to the pros!

The radio cut off again...

.....

This is the topography of the Beppu Bay seabed, measured with ultrasound. There seems to be a lump of what may be the sand of Uryu Island along the slope.

The Eos appears to have sunk here, at a depth of nearly 40m.

Got it!

You're going to take a wire down, run it through this part of the submarine, and come back... After that, we'll connect it to a thick cable, and pull it up with the crane.



So don't stay at that depth for too long! If you push yourself out of haste, it could be fatal!

I know I'm repeating myself, but it's pitch black underwater and 40m is a dangerous depth.

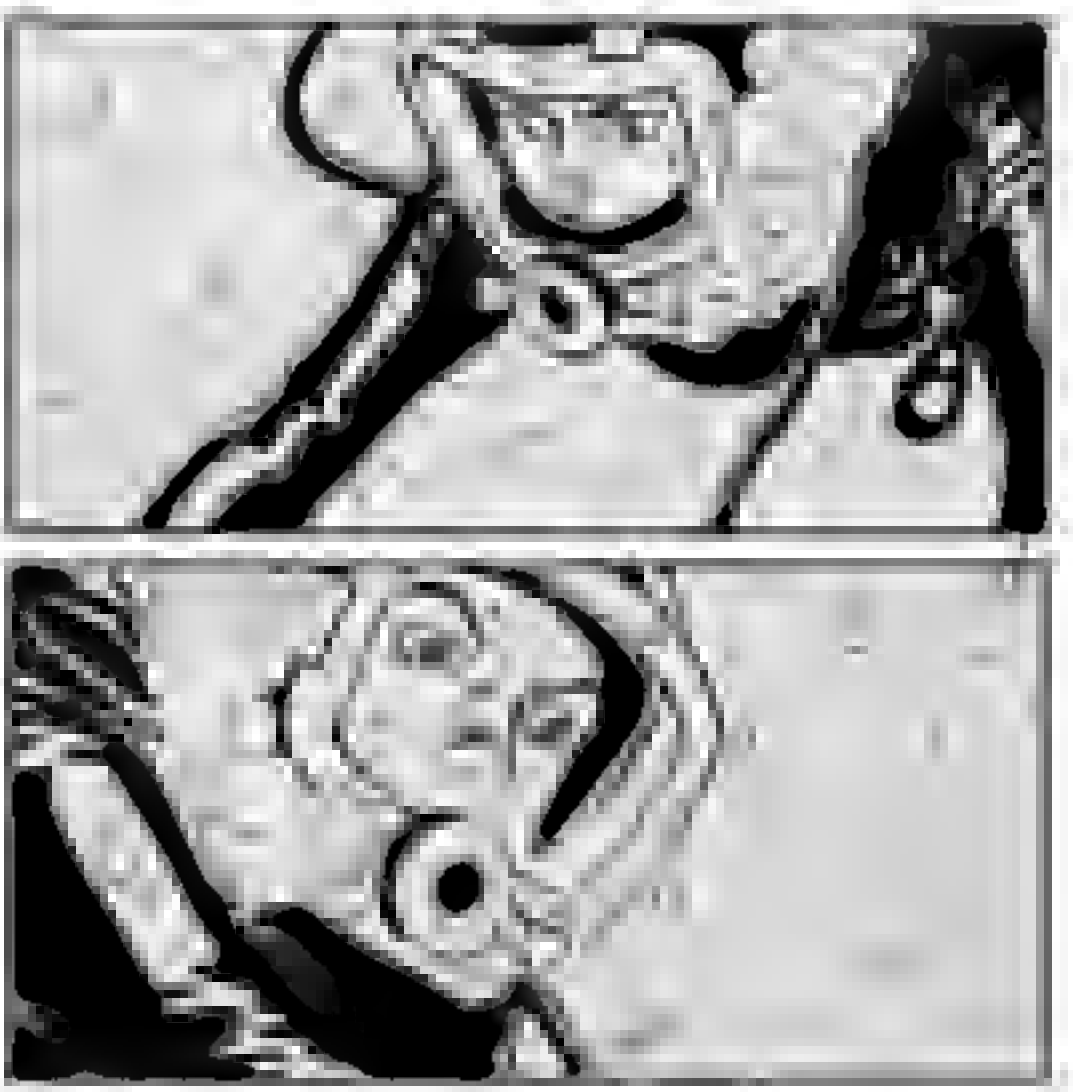
He's fainted... And his pulse and breathing have weakened consider-ably.

GWA AAA UGH...

We have an emer-gency oxygen tank!

Good! Hey, you help out, too! Throw his head back and make it easier for him to breathe.

H...HIS HEART'S STOP-PED!



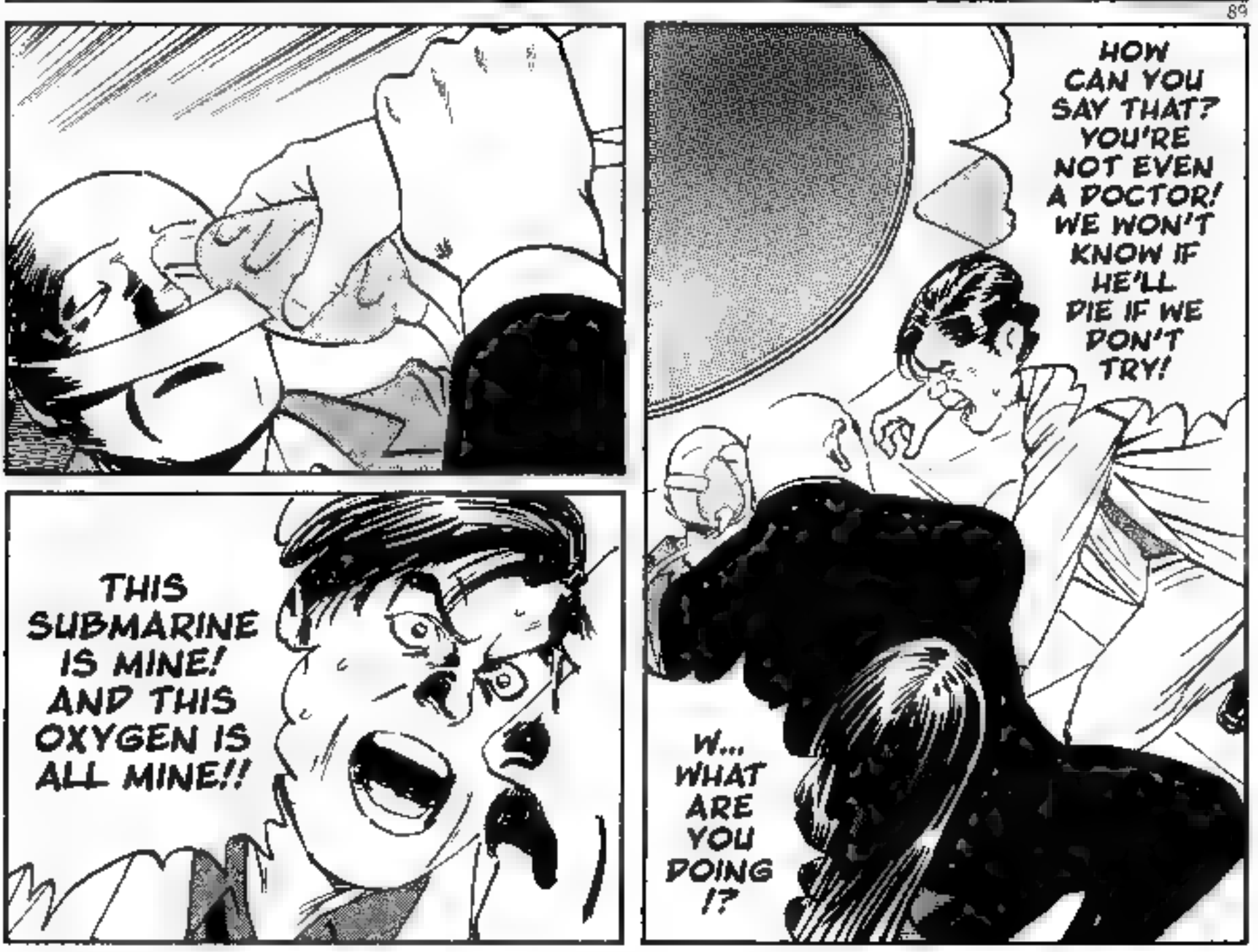
1、
2、
3、
4…

At least that's better than dying.

I learned how to perform CPR from the university staff; but with my strength, I might end up breaking his ribs. 1, 2, 3...

H...Hey, isn't that the only emergency oxygen tank?
What if we're down here all night without anyone coming for us? We won't be able to breathe!
We'll cross that bridge when we get to it.
But for now, Professor Kano will die if he doesn't get oxygen!

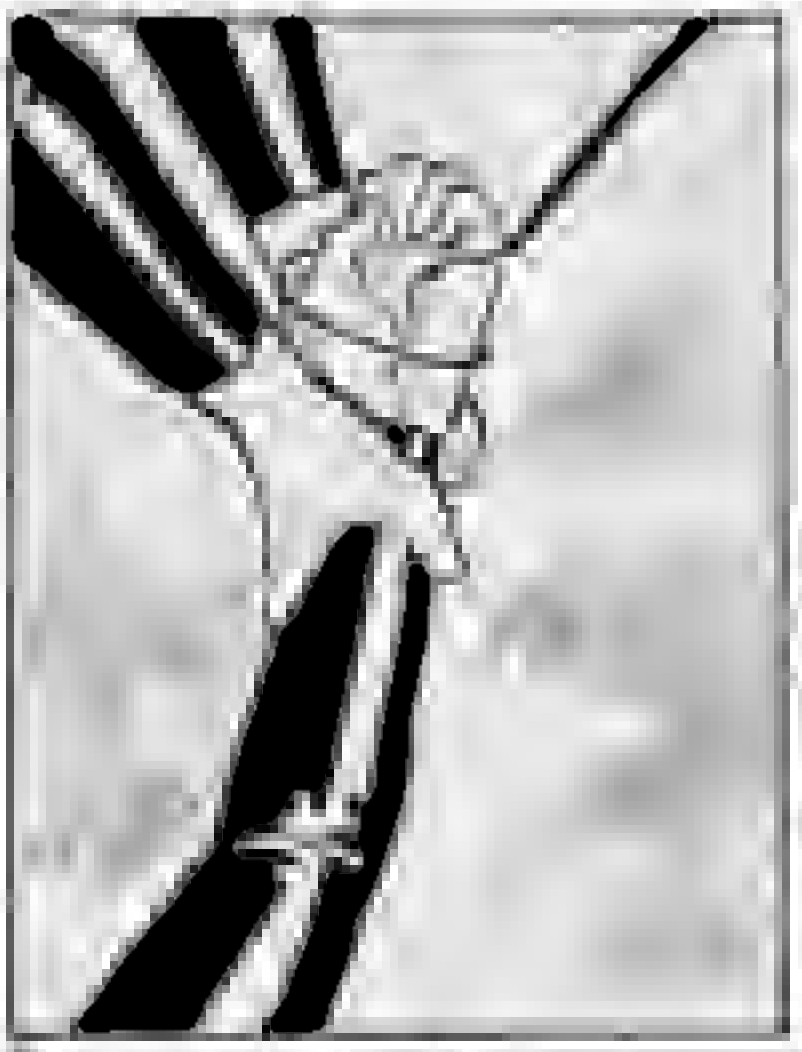


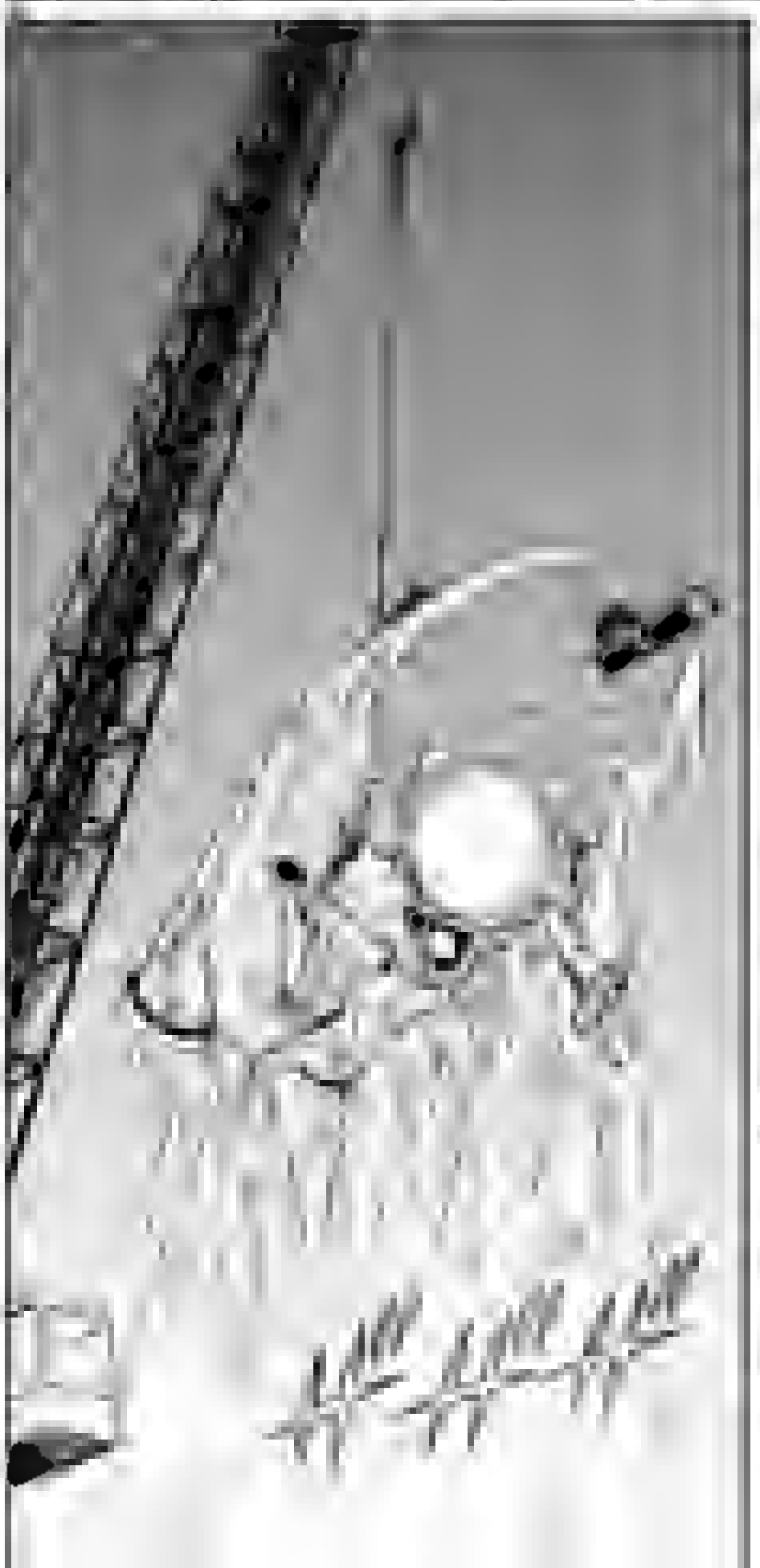

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? YOU'RE NOT EVEN A DOCTOR! WE WON'T KNOW IF HE'LL DIE IF WE DON'T TRY!
W... WHAT ARE YOU DOING !?
THIS SUBMARINE IS MINE! AND THIS OXYGEN IS ALL MINE!!

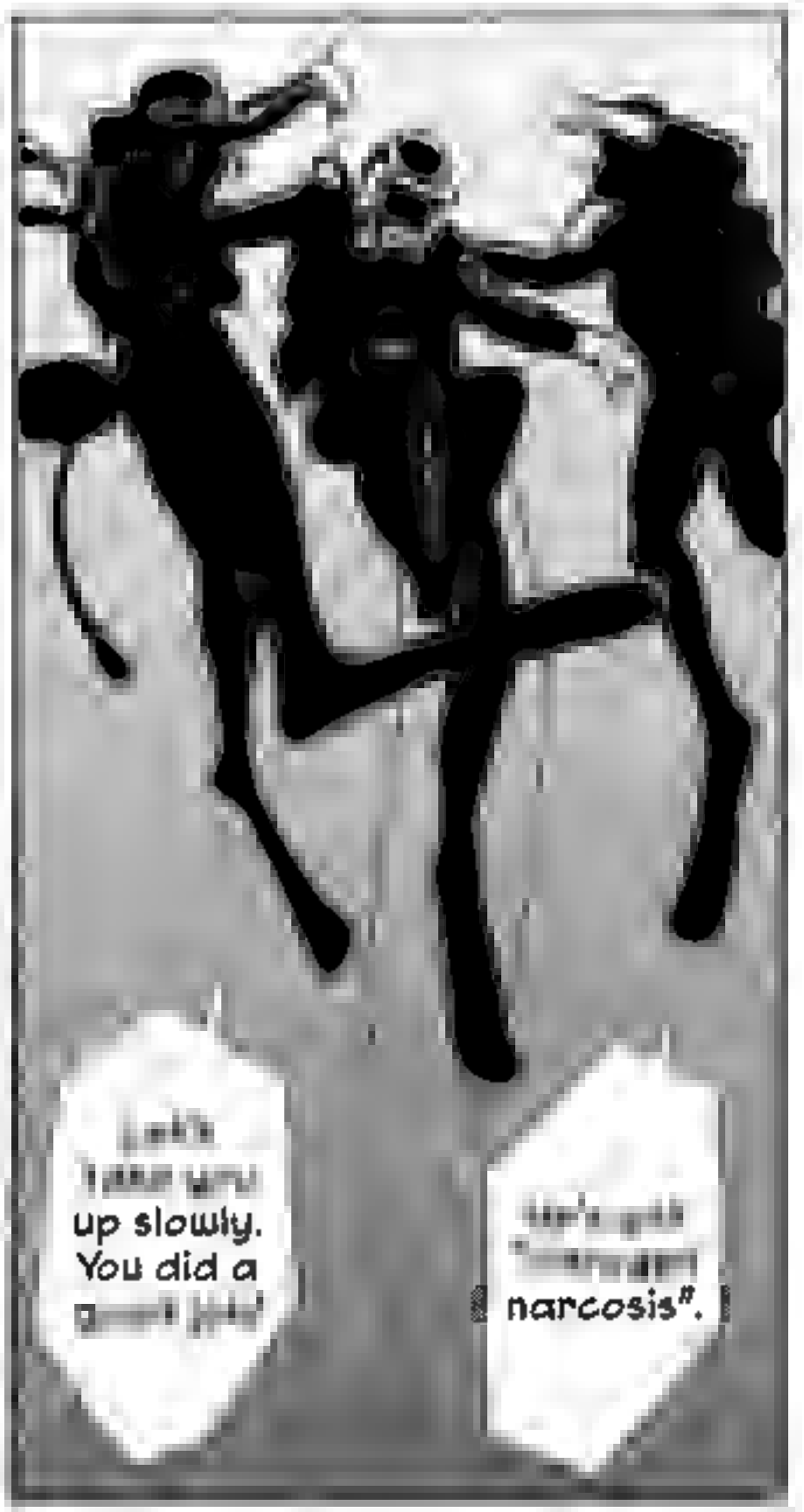
I guess the boxercise came in handy... But I guess I'm fired now...

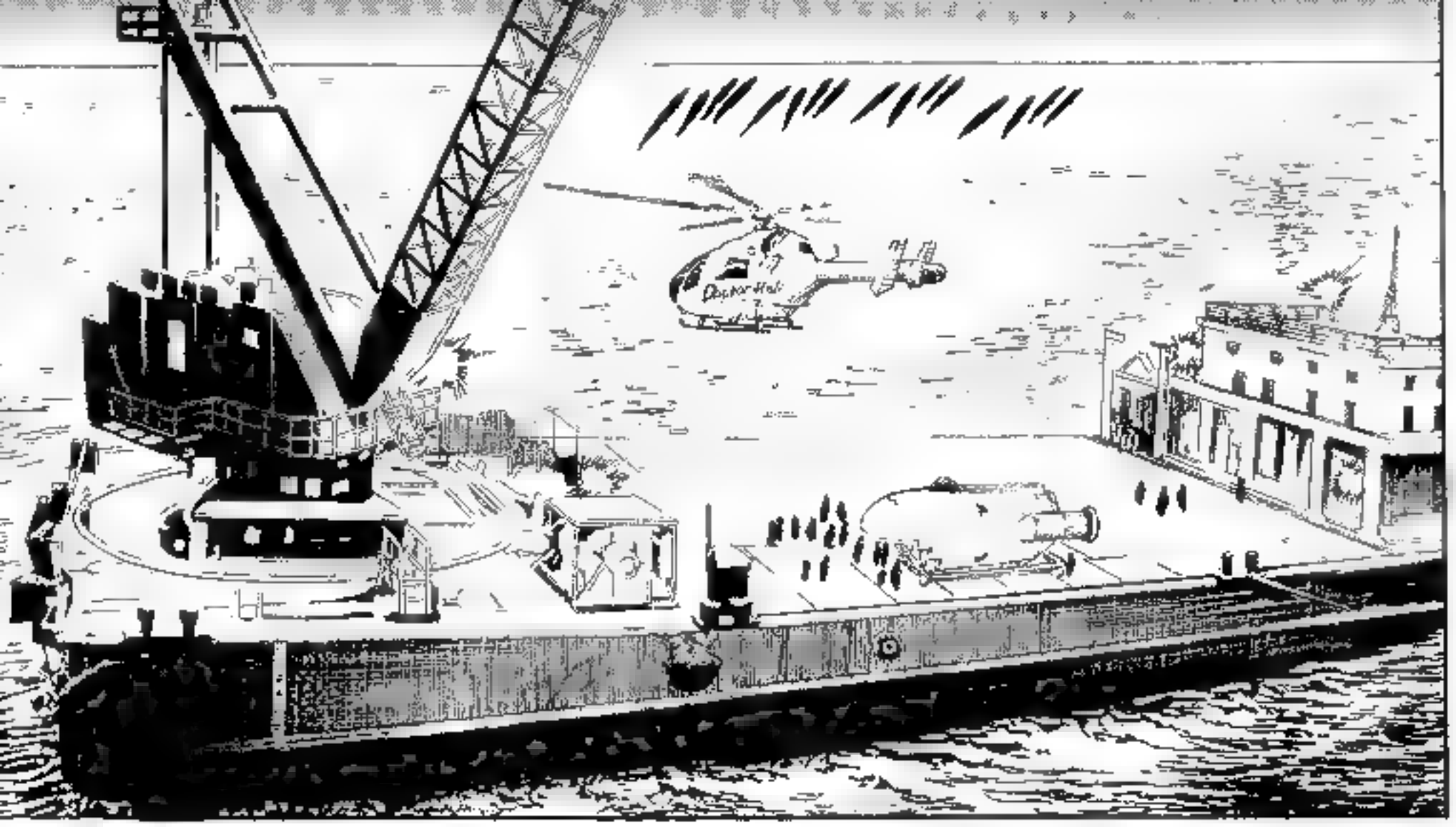
Thanks for the help. My hands were tied.

AHH ...

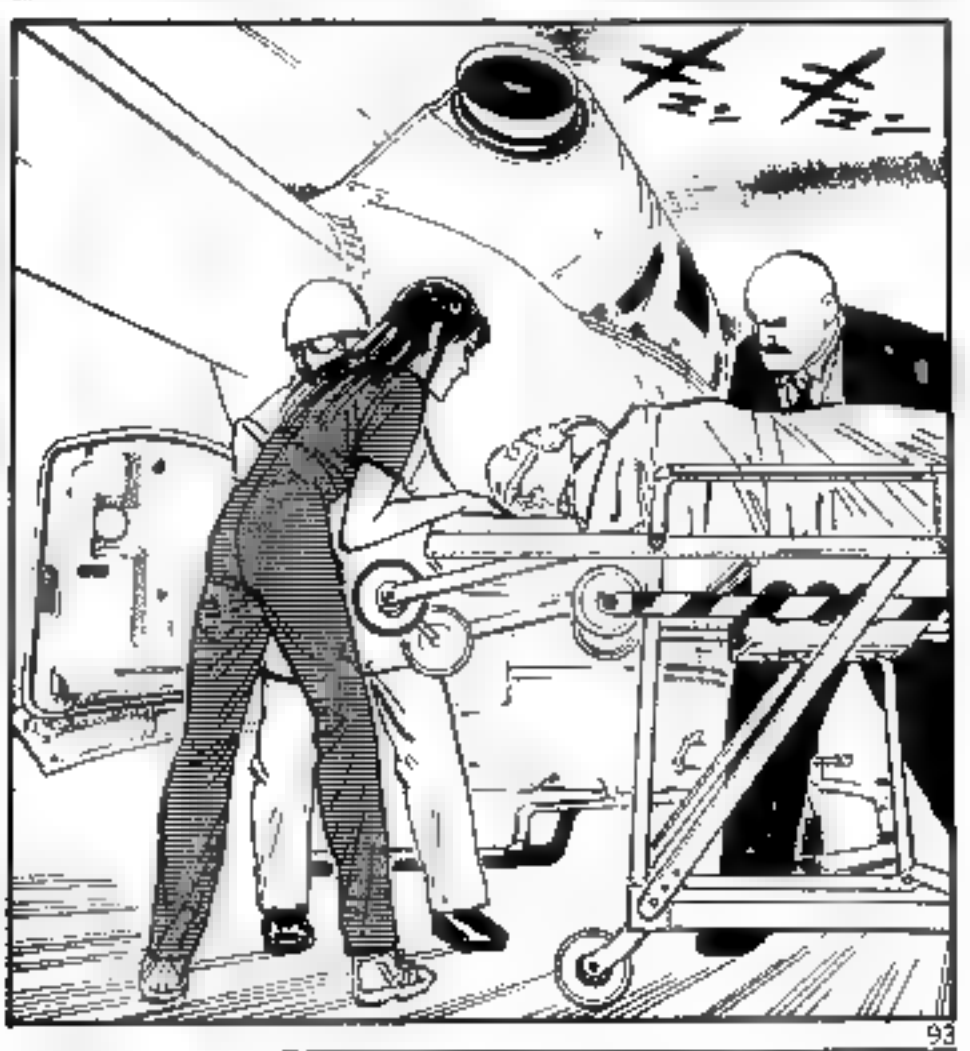




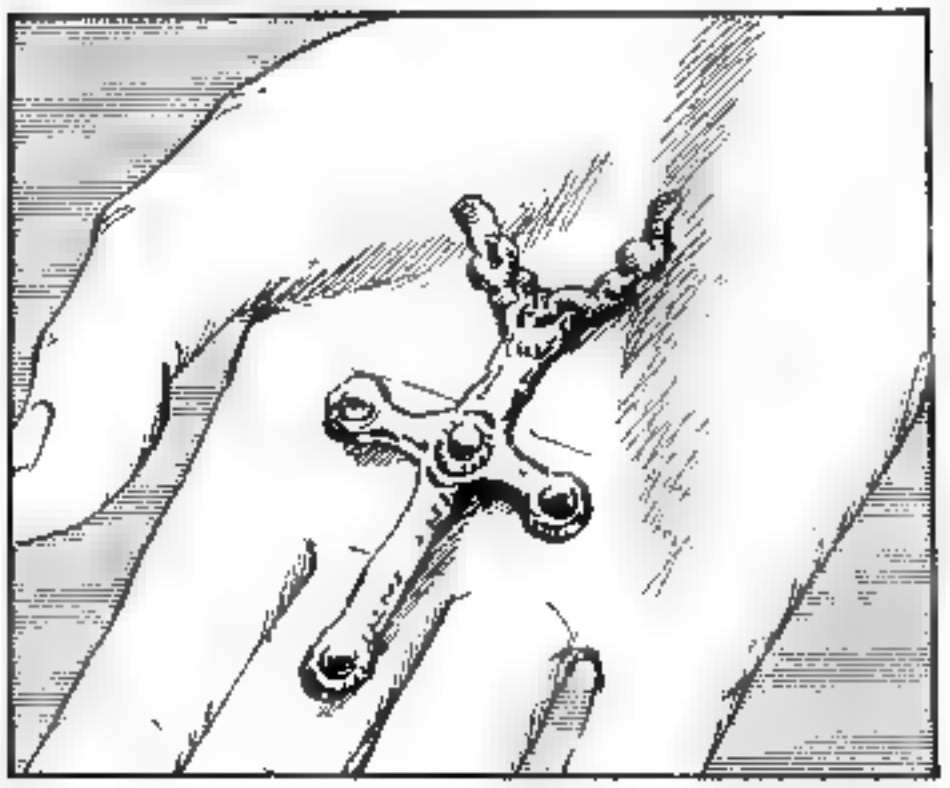

up slowly.
You did a
narcosis".


Doctor Hell

Y...
Yuria
...







I grabbed on to this when I fell in the mud...

Thank you...

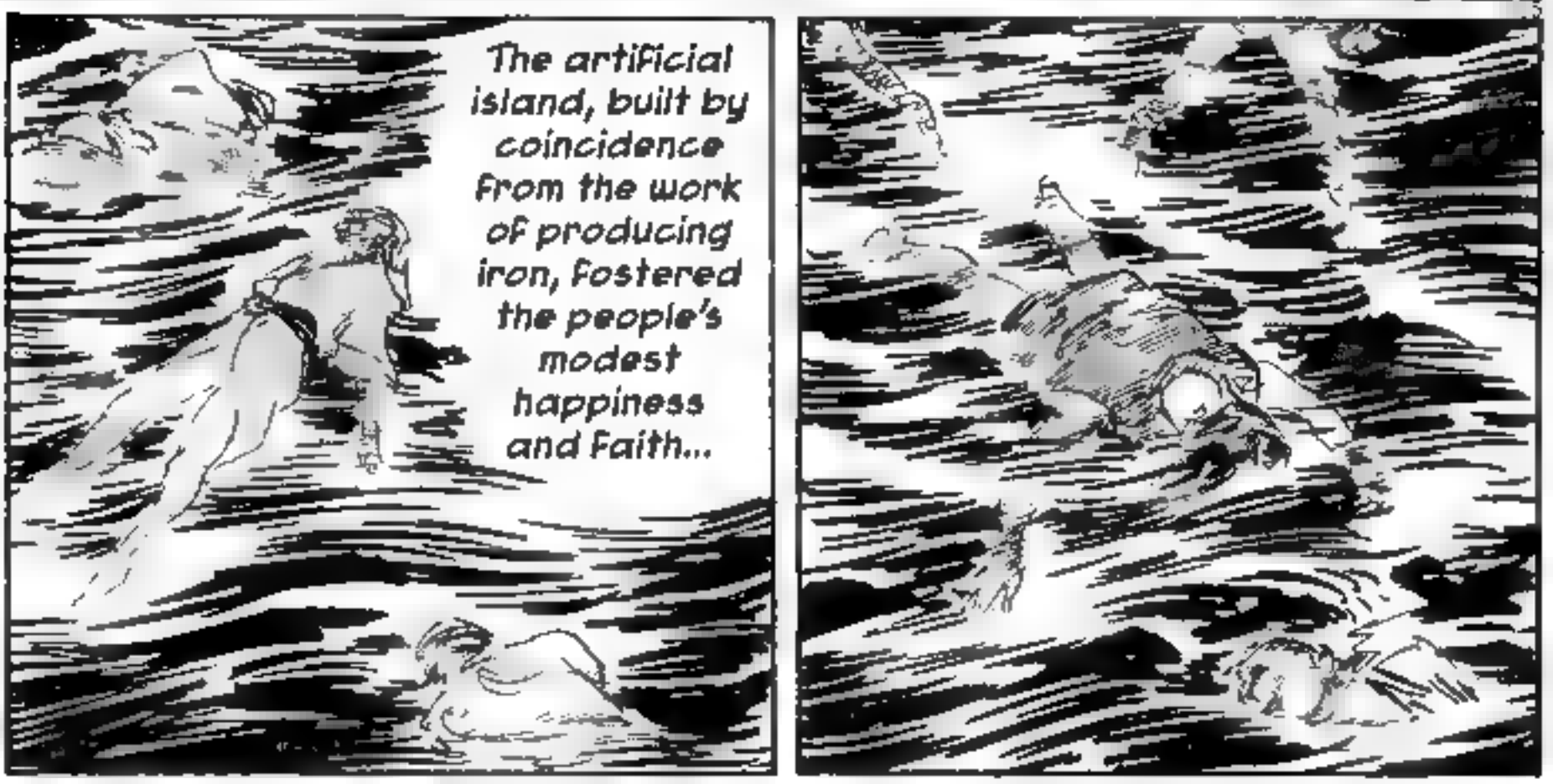
I don't know whose it was... but it's yours now. I want you to have it...

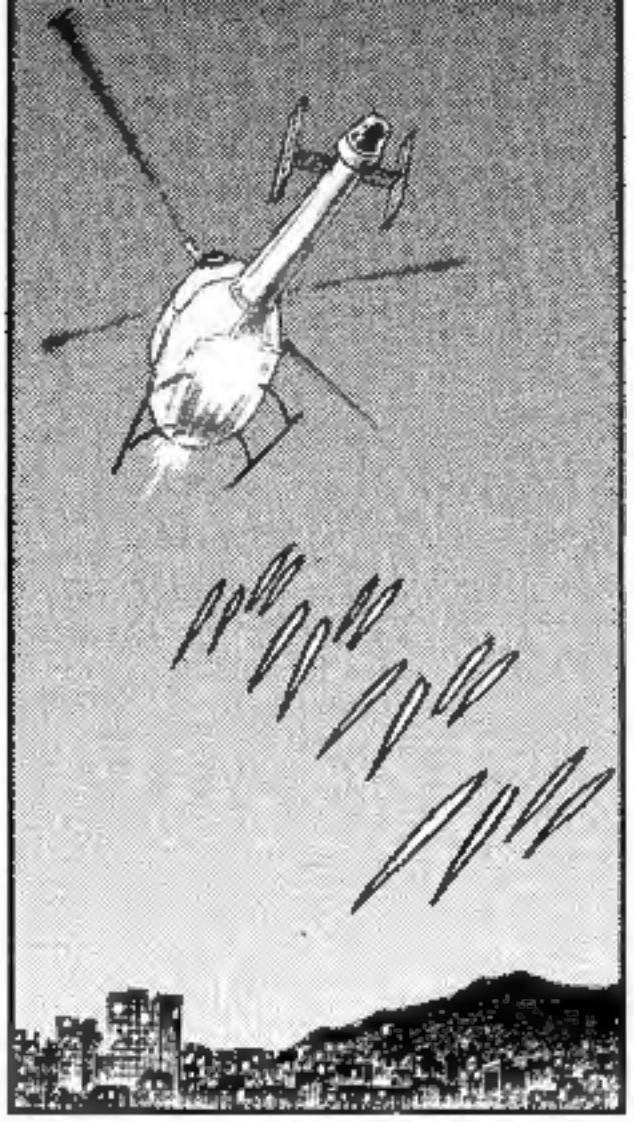
.....

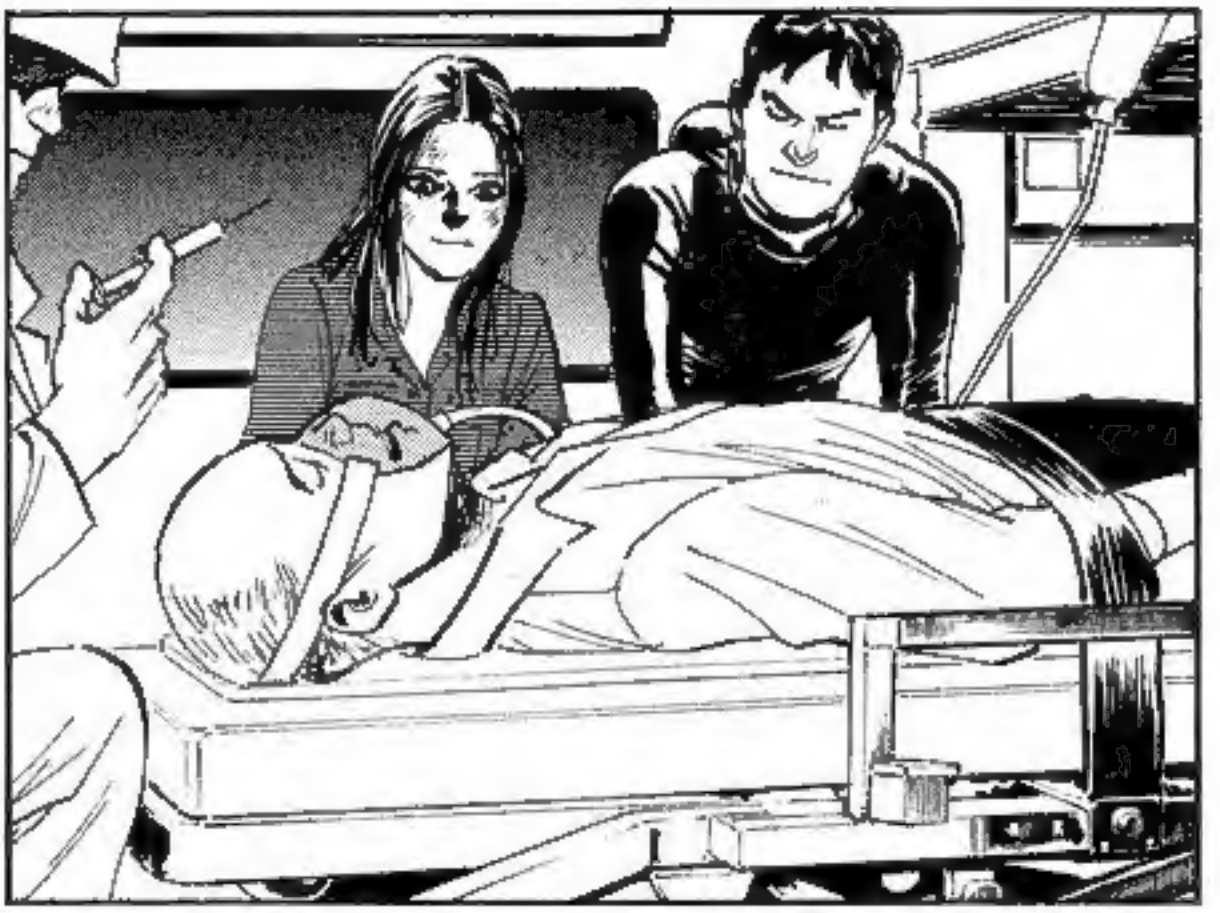
94

Well, there must've been young men and women trying to live together, even on Uryu Island, eh, Professor Kano...?

The greatness and transience of human activity... Those are the feelings that arise when I think of the destiny of Uryu Island...


The artificial island, built by coincidence from the work of producing iron, fostered the people's modest happiness and faith...





**The Case Records of Professor Munakata – Collection 8 END**

これらの作品はフィクションです。
実在の団体・人物・事件などには
一切関係ありません。

◎初出一覧◎

**廃線**

『ビッグコミック』2007年8月10日号

◈

**九呂古志家の崩壊**

『ビッグコミック』2007年6月10日号、6月25日号、7月10日号、7月25日号

◈

**失われた島**

『ビッグコミック』2007年9月25日号、10月10日号、10月25日号、11月10日号

◎参考資料・協力◎

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『新潟の石油・天然ガス 開発の一三〇年』島津光夫・著(野島出版)
「沈んだ島 別府湾・瓜生島の謎」(「瓜生島」調査会)／加藤知弘(「瓜生島」調査会)

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

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# THE CASE BOOKS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

## CHAPTER 25

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